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*Translated from the French
of Adrien Desclozeaux*

GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES

BY

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GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES

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GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES

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I

THE BABOUS OF LA BOURDAISIÈRE AND THE D'ESTRÉES

WHETHER Gabrielle was born in Touraine or in Picardy, and what was the year of her birth, are questions which are difficult to answer with certainty. According to M. Paulin Paris, who annotated Tallement des Réaux, and M. le Baron Angellier, the author of an interesting notice on the château de la Bourdaisière, which is in the neighbourhood of Tours, Gabrielle was born in Touraine, at la Bourdaisière, and in the year 1565. On what evidence these two authors are led to make so positive an assertion we do not know.

No document in any way throwing light on Gabrielle's birthplace has ever been forthcoming; and Picardy, as well as Touraine, lays claim to her, as being born at the château of Cœuvres. If we are unable to state with certainty the name of the province where she first saw the light, we can at least call the date 1565 into question and substitute an exact date.

Gabrielle was eighteen when she married, as she

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herself says in a letter bearing her signature, which she addressed on the 27th of August 1594 to the presiding judge at Amiens. The letter dealt with the annulment of the marriage which she had contracted a little more than two years before with the Sieur de Liencourt: 'Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées, supported by her aunts and sisters and other relations, puts it before you that, as she was only eighteen at the time of her marriage, she must have been unduly compelled thereto. . . .' The report of the proceedings in reference to her petition contains further evidence confirming the first statement. At the examination to which Gabrielle was submitted on the 17th of December 1594 she declared 'that she was about twenty-one years of age.' Therefore, if Gabrielle was about twenty-one in December 1594, she was eighteen and a half in June 1592 at the time of her marriage at Noyon, and she must have been born about the end of the year 1573, according to her own testimony.

Her mother, Françoise Babou de la Bourdaisière, Dame d'Estrées, Marquise de Cœuvres, was of Touraine, and belonged to a by no means ancient family. The Babous gained their first eminence through the marriage of Philbert Babou, Seigneur de Souliers, Mayor of Tours, with Marie Gaudin, Dame de la Bourdaisière, who was celebrated for her beauty. Marie Gaudin afterwards became a mistress of Francis I., and from that moment her house reaped a harvest of riches and honours.

The château de la Bourdaisière was, by order of the King, entirely rebuilt in the style of the

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Renaissance. The work was begun in 1520, the year in which the King began the building of Chambord and Saint-Germain. Although it had not the splendour and importance of these palaces, Marie Gaudin's château was a building well worthy of notice, especially for the delicate ornamentation on the windows at the front of the house, round which were carved in relief innumerable letter F's.

It was some years later demolished by the Duc de Choiseul, and the material used in the construction of the pagoda of Chanteloup.

The brother of the Dame de la Bourdaisière became cardinal and ambassador at Rome. His tomb is still to be seen in the church of Saint-Louis-des-Français. His son, Jean Babou, was the most illustrious of the family—Seigneur de la Bourdaisière, of Sagonne and of Thuisseau, Knight of St Michael and of the Holy Ghost, Grand Master of the Artillery in 1567, ambassador at Rome, steward to the Duc d'Alençon, Governor and Bailiff of Gien, Amboise, Touraine, and Brest. He made a great match in marrying the daughter of one of Henry II.'s ministers—Françoise Roberlet. They had four sons and seven daughters.

Of the four sons two, Philbert and Fabrice, died in infancy. Jean, Baron de Sagonne, who had command of the cavalry for the League, was killed at the battle of Arques on the 21st of September 1589 by the Comte d'Auvergne, who was not sixteen years old at the time. George, the eldest, Sieur de la Bourdaisière, was Grand Master of the Artillery for the League. When

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Chartres, where he was in command, at length fell to Henry IV., his niece, Gabrielle d'Estrées, intervened on his behalf with the King, and he became captain of a hundred men-at-arms, and was knighted on the 5th of January 1595.

The daughters were Marie, Françoise, Isabelle, Madeleine, Diane; the two others took orders, and one after the other became Abbesses of Beaumont, near Tours. The second Abbess, also called Madeleine, died on the 16th of November in that abbey.

The mother was more beautiful than any of her daughters, and on becoming a widow she married for the second time for love, at the age of fifty, the Maréchal Duc d'Aumont, by whom she had no children.

All the women of the family of Babou had a bad reputation, especially Françoise, the mother of Gabrielle. 'They all married and they were all beautiful, intriguing women,' says Saint-Simon; 'they were known in their time as the seven mortal sins.'

On her father's side Gabrielle belonged to an ancient and noble family of Picardy.

Henry IV. wrote of her grandfather, Jean d'Estrées:

'And still fresh in our memory are the services rendered by the Sieur d'Estrées, her grandfather, who served without intermission under the four kings preceding us, in all the wars they waged, fighting in all their battles and taking part in every noteworthy achievement, and always receiving some special notice for his bravery. After hold-

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ing many important and honourable offices, he was appointed Grand Master of the Artillery, a post which he filled for many years so worthily that even by foreigners was he considered the greatest and the wisest that had ever held that office.'

During his own lifetime an account was published of all the sieges at which he had been present. He discovered a new metal for use in warfare, and made many improvements in artillery. He was a tall, thin man, with a long white beard, who used to pass quietly along the trenches on a great chestnut mare, who did not bow her head, any more than her master, to the bullets that flew past her. He was born in 1486, and had been page to Queen Anne of Bretagne. That great Princess upheld the healthy traditions of olden times as to the education of the young, and Jean d'Estrées was often whipped. Whippings occurred most frequently when they were on a journey and he failed to give proper attention to the leading of the special mule of the Queen's litter confided to his care. The state of the roads in those days seems to us sufficiently to explain the good lady's severity.

Jean d'Estrées served under five kings, and not under four as Henry IV. erroneously states in the document bearing his signature from which we have quoted. He was twelve years old on the accession of Louis XII., and carried his first arms under that King in Italy; he was twenty-nine on the accession of Francis I., and was present at all the battles of his reign. Henry II. made him Grand Master of the Artillery by letters patent on the 9th

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of July 1550. In this capacity he served Francis II. and Charles IX., and died on the 23rd of October 1571 at Cœuvres. Thanks to an act of bravery which he performed in his youth he contracted a grand alliance. During the Italian wars Jacques de Bourbon, the bastard of Vendôme, was wounded, unhorsed, and deserted by his followers. Jean d'Estrées came to his rescue, and after a severe struggle lifted him to his saddle, and saved his life. In return for this service the bastard gave him in marriage his eldest daughter, Catherine de Bourbon, whose mother belonged to the great family of Rubemfré. He is said to have been the first nobleman of Picardy who was converted to Protestantism. He certainly was no stranger to the pillaging of the churches in his neighbourhood, but in the end he returned to the Catholic faith.

His son Antoine, the father of Gabrielle d'Estrées, was one of Henry IV.'s most faithful followers, but he was a less capable servant than a devoted friend. Easy-going and thoughtless, his life was given up to pleasure. It was whilst he was presiding over a ballet during his governorship of La Fère that the Marquis de Pierre, thanks to intelligence he had received concerning the place, entered it at the head of the Leaguers, took him prisoner, and gained possession of a large quantity of money which the royalist families of the neighbourhood had deposited at La Fère, thinking the town a safer stronghold than their own châteaux. Antoine d'Estrées neglected his family as well as the King's interests. His wife, after having borne

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him nine children, of whom eight were living, left him, and, although she was by then about forty-eight years of age, went and lived with the Marquis de Touzel-Alègre of Auvergne, Governor of the town of Issoire for the King.

Antoine d'Estrées had seven daughters. The eldest died in infancy; Françoise was married to the Sieur de Bournel, Baron de Mouchi; Angélique became Abbess of Berteaucourt, in the diocese of Amiens; it was she who subsequently attained such notoriety as Abbess of Maubisson. Diane became the Maréchale de Balagny, and Gabrielle the celebrated mistress of Henry IV. Julienne-Hippolyte and Françoise, the latter still a very young child, were with their mother. Gabrielle's eldest brother, the Marquis de Cœuvres, died when still quite young at the siege of Laon. Her second brother entered the Church and became Bishop of Noyon, but later, in 1595, on the death of his elder brother, he took arms, and died in the reign of Louis XIV., at the age of ninety-eight, a ducal peer and Field-Marshal of the forces.

Such were the various members of the family of Estrées.

II

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THE chroniclers of her time represent Gabrielle, most unjustly, as far outstripping the other women of her family in evil living. They make out that

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at the age of sixteen she was sold to Henry III. for the sum of six thousand écus through the medium of the Duc d'Eperon, who was, so they say, the lover of her sister Diane, the future Maréchale de Balagny. Montigny, who was charged with bearing the sum to the mother, is said to have kept two thousand écus for himself. If it were worth while seriously to discuss such tales we might remark that she was not sixteen when Henry III. died, and that several years before his death that dissolute Prince was already quite worn out by his shameless debauchery. The same *Chronique Scandaleuse* maintains that she was also sold to Zamet, the wealthy financier, that she lived for a year with the Cardinal de Guise, and that she belonged in turn to the Duc de Longueville, the Duc de Bellegarde, and to several noblemen in the neighbourhood of Cœuvres, such as Brunet and Stenay.

The evident exaggeration of such stories is sufficient proof of their falsity. How is it possible for us to believe that before her first interview with Henry IV. in November 1590—that is to say, before she was seventeen—her life ran in evil courses such as these?

We ought to place but little confidence in contemporary witnesses, especially when we are dealing with a time of religious controversy and civil war. The Leaguers bore Henry an implacable hatred, and they were no less ready to stoop to calumny than to murder. It was not enough for them that Gabrielle d'Estrées, unmindful of her duty, openly became the King's mistress, and bore him children

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in adultery; they would make out that she was from her earliest years a shameless courtesan. Nor did they lay aside their venomous darts after she had become definitely the King's mistress, for then, according to them, she even broke faith with him, and bore children that were not his and compelled him to recognise them. They would indeed be fortunate if they could induce their readers to believe that the hero of Arques and of Ivry was a low Sganarelle, only prevented by her death from marrying a clever courtesan who used him for her sport!

It is true that Gabrielle was born amidst all the corruptions of her time, and that her own family afforded her the most deplorable examples, but we prefer to draw a different portrait from that traced by the venomous hatred of a vanquished party. A true picture, although it leaves room for many grave faults both in her and in the King, shows us, in spite of all, a woman, gentle and gracious, and always working in the interests of peace. Intimate as she was with the thoughts of the King, and knowing all that displeased him, she could advise those around her as to their actions; she dressed their wounds and obliterated their offences. The favour the King bestowed on her, which might have been so dangerous in other hands, was employed by her for the public welfare. She was the source whence every boon and every favour flowed, and it was to her that everyone turned to obtain reparation for injustice.

D'Aubigné, who inveighs so bitterly and so un-

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justly against Henry IV., cannot bring his rough pen to anything but praises in writing of her. Her gentleness and her sweetness disarm him; stern Huguenot that he was, he did not fail to recognise the modesty and simplicity of her bearing, and he says of her that her great beauty had about it nothing that was sensual, and that it is astonishing to consider how few were her enemies.

There is plenty of other evidence in favour of Gabrielle. We will content ourselves with instancing the friendship in which she was held by three women who led lives so virtuous as not to be sullied by the least trace of suspicion. First there was Madame Catherine de France, subsequently Duchesse de Bar, the King's only sister. She was a Protestant, devout and high-minded, and she was willing to join hands with Gabrielle, to accept her as her future sister-in-law, and to live with her in great intimacy. Her second friend was the widow of the Prince of Orange, Louise de Coligny, the daughter of the Admiral, a zealous Protestant, mother of a family held in the very highest respect; she too prayed most earnestly that she might live to see Gabrielle the lawful wife of the King. A Catholic, who by her piety and her virtue was worthy of figuring by the side of the Princess of Orange was the third friend; we speak of the widow of Henry III., Louise de Lorraine, that frail, pathetic soul, who was so true a type of conjugal affection. The little white Queen of Chenonceaux had lived her life at the Court of the last of the Valois without a stain on her character, and had filled Henry IV. with feelings of the

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deepest respect. Gabrielle had an opportunity of displaying her generosity by delicately coming to the aid of these unfortunate members of the royal family. She brought about an agreement with the creditors of Catherine de Médicis, who were threatening to drive the poor, homeless Queen from Chenonceaux. Is it likely that these three admirable women would have publicly professed themselves the friend of such a woman as the pamphlets of the time depict, and need we, therefore, give the least credence to their malicious tales?

There is yet another woman of princely family, and a near relation to Queen Louise, who lived on terms of great intimacy with Gabrielle, but we must not compare her with the three other friends. We speak of the beautiful Louise de Guise, who afterwards became the Princesse de Conti.

Henry IV. had at one time thought of marrying her. In the famous interview at Rennes with Sully in 1598 in reference to his marriage, the King, after speaking of the marriageable maidens of foreign lands, adds:

‘As for those within my kingdom, my niece of Guise pleases me the most, notwithstanding the malicious little rumour that she prefers “*les poulets en papier qu’en fricassée*”¹; for, of a truth, I do not believe it, and I prefer a woman who makes love to one who is always quarrelling; not that I have any fault to find with her,—on the contrary she has a gentle and pleasant disposition and a lively manner, and is above all of good family, tall

¹ Poulet—a love letter, a chicken.

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and beautiful, with the look of a woman who would bear fine children.'

It is evident that Henry was not unwilling to choose her for his queen; 'only fearing,' he adds, 'her great love for her own house and above all for her brothers, who might awaken in her a desire to raise them up against me, or against my children, should the government of the State ever fall into their hands.' Louise was well aware that she would in no way have disparaged the royal dignity, nor was she obliged to forgive Gabrielle for having deprived her of the King's affection. In later years she came to see Gabrielle, a woman whose rank was low compared with that of the Guises, herself about to mount the throne that had been so much the object of her ambitions. How was it that she loved her so sincerely in spite of all?

There are two novels, both belonging to the end of the sixteenth century or the beginning of the seventeenth, which treat of Henry's love affairs during the early years of his reign; one is the *Amours du Grand Alcandre*, and the other the *Adventures de la Cour de Perse*. We have reason to attribute the former to the pen of the Duc de Bellegarde; the latter is by Mademoiselle de Guise, who became later the Princesse de Conti. Both speak in a very different fashion from the chroniclers quoted above of the people connected with the Court, and especially of Gabrielle.

More has been read into the *Amours du Grand Alcandre* than the author intended to convey. The expressions used in reference to Gabrielle have been

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taken literally, and a carnal meaning has been attached to the word 'lover' where it was really employed only in a figurative sense, and applied to those who, by their assiduous attentions and their devoted homage, bore witness to the admiration they had for her beauty and to the lively sympathy she inspired by the sweetness and amiability of her character. Platonic love was already coming into fashion, at anyrate in novels; it was beginning to be more and more generally described, until it came to form the very foundation of such tales as those of Mademoiselle de Scudery and Madame de Lafayette.

If we are to believe that all Gabrielle's admirers were happy lovers we must realise that almost from her childhood she must have renounced all hopes of marrying, in consequence of having given herself up to evil ways so early in life. But the best proof that the author of the *Amours* does not assign this character to those whom he calls 'lover' is that which he says of the Duc de Bellegarde. Those who deal only in scandal maintain that Gabrielle was his mistress before she knew Henry IV., and that she was afterwards false to the King with her former lover. The *Amours* state clearly, in relating Henry's first attempts to win Gabrielle's love, that: 'She who did not love the King, and who had given all her affection to Bellegarde, fell into a great rage with Henry, swearing that she would never love him and reproaching him for preventing her from marrying Bellegarde, as she desired.'

Her own common-sense would have induced her,

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seeing that she still wished at this time to become Duchesse de Bellegarde, to order her behaviour with prudence and discretion. It is the hatred of the enemies of Henry IV., together with the lack of any reliable sources of information, that has led to the disfigurement of Gabrielle's history. We will endeavour to present her in her true light.

III

THE CHÂTEAU OF CŒUVRES—HENRY'S FIRST INTERVIEW WITH GABRIELLE

THE château of Cœuvres, the cradle of Gabrielle d'Estrées, where she spent her youth, and where she would appear to have been born, lies twelve kilometres to the north-east of Villers-Cotterets and about fifteen to the south-east of Soissons. It was there that Henry came and camped from the 8th to the 10th of November 1590, and it was there that he saw for the first time the woman 'of wonderful beauty' for whom he conceived so violent a passion, which lasted down to the time of her tragic death. This ancient château, which was completely ruined at the time of the Revolution, has since been in great part restored; the vast stables, the manorial dovecot, the north wall of the great court, the south-east turret, and the kitchens and outhouses with their freestone arches, still remain.

It has been our pleasure to piece together this manor of the d'Estrées, and with the aid of ancient documents to make it live again in every minute

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detail, but we will here content ourselves with saying that in 1590, at the time of Henry's first visit, Cœuvres was in the shape of a rectangle seventy metres long by sixty-four broad. The four corners were flanked with square turrets which jutted out over the moat. All the buildings were designed in the most elegant style of the Renaissance, and raised up on vaulted arches. The entrance was on the north side of the castle, looking towards the town of Cœuvres. The moat was crossed by a drawbridge which led to an entrance turret placed in the middle of a rampart which shut in the north side. There were no buildings on the west side; the two north-west and south-west turrets were joined by a rampart. Between the two south-west and south-east turrets stretched the south front, where elegant arches served as shelter for the litters and heavy coaches of the day. Above were the arcades, which had disappeared by the end of the seventeenth century, whence one might catch a glimpse of the smiling valley of Valsery. The north-east turret served as a chapel; the south-east turret, with the little group of buildings connecting it with the terrace, was, according to tradition, the apartment of Gabrielle d'Estrées and her sister Diane.

The windows were ornamented with sculpture, and the roof, which was covered with slates, had 'gutters and ridges decorated with lead ornaments.' The principal part of the building faced east, and from its windows could be seen a large sheet of water in a garden set out with paths and shady side-walks, with trim hedges and trees clipped in

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the fashion of the time. The garden and the water were on a level with the moat which surrounded the three other fronts. The east side was given up to the kitchens, offices, and outhouses, and these still exist. Large stone steps led from one floor to another. On the ground floor was a great hall with six bays, where the family usually met together to take their repast. On the first floor a gallery not only ran the length of the great hall, but stretched above two other rooms of the ground floor, and was led into at either end by the two main staircases. It was the scene of '*les festes et balets*.' In later days, about the middle of the eighteenth century, this fête gallery was transformed into a theatre. To the north of the château, beyond the moat, bordering on the town of Cœuvres, may still be seen, almost intact, the outhouses of the château. Among the various buildings formerly used as stables, as the residence of the farmer-general, etc., can be seen two huge storehouses built in freestone, in which the corn and the fruits of the harvest were stored. Over the doorways stand carved pieces of ordnance, ready to send their volleys over the country. Not far off the manorial dovecot is still to be seen, with its vaulted store-room on the ground floor opening on to the kitchen garden, bearing the date 1559. One hand raised both château and outhouses in the same solid fashion with the aid of solid masses of freestone; and the hand was none other than that of the Grand Master, Jean d'Estrées, who was the first to give its lustre to the famous name of Estrées.

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When the King presented himself at the château of Cœuvres he was received, in the absence of Madame d'Estrées, by Gabrielle and Diane. The general bearing of the two sisters must have been beyond reproach; the one, Gabrielle, was at that time about seventeen, a maiden with fair golden hair, a lovely figure, and a complexion strikingly beautiful and clear; she bore herself with a natural dignity that never deserted her. Her face was rendered still more beautiful by the sweetness and charm of its expression. Her sister Diane, although of slight figure, had inherited the family beauty, and, above all, the vivacity that was lacking in her sister. Both were still very young when they made their first entry into society; Brantôme saw them at the Louvre, a little before the death of the Queen-Mother, and he points them out to us among the young beauties of that brilliant Court of the Valois which was at that time casting its flickering gleams over Paris. At the time of the civil war, when the capital was barricaded, they had been compelled to leave their mansion in the Rue des Bons-Enfants and retire to Cœuvres.

The Béarnais, on the other hand, was thirty-seven. He had been King for a little over a year, but he had as yet no capital, and his kingdom was extremely small. He was a thin man, in the prime of his vigour, and so poor that he lacked even a change of linen, and his doublets were worn threadbare by his cuirass. But in spite of all he preserved his high spirits and his dare-devilry, an infectious gaiety even in the midst of impending dangers, and

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a ready wit which sparkles on every page of his huge correspondence. Everyone was captivated by his playful sallies and his unaffected friendliness. He displayed, moreover, enormous energy. He was always in the field; by day he fought, firing off his pistol shots side by side with his men-at-arms; and by night he sat beneath his tent and wrote to all the sovereigns of Europe, to all the towns and all the leaders of his party, leaving no stone unturned that might help him to win his battle. And still he found time to make love! Truly a King after his people's own heart, possessing all their good qualities and all their faults—a King who, by the force of his energy, giving no thought to his life or his personal safety, at length brought peace to the poor land of France.

Among those who came with Henry to Cœuvres was Bellegarde, his chief equerry, a young and brilliant nobleman, who was himself desirous of marrying Gabrielle, and was imprudent enough to entertain the King with an account of his mistress's charms. Gabrielle had herself a lively affection for him, and it was a long time before she forgot him.

Henry IV. had for several years been separated from his wife; he was weary of his liaison with Corisande d'Audoins, Comtesse de Guiche, and when he first set eyes on Gabrielle it was with a free heart, and quickly did he fall a victim to her beauty. What happened, we wonder, at this first meeting with the woman who had so great an influence on his after-life? Did he display the feelings her beauty called up in him? It is probable that he did, but it

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is also certain that Gabrielle did not give him any encouragement. At that time she thought only of marriage, and she must have taken the compliments and attentions of the Béarnais as no more than the ordinary homage men were accustomed to render to her beauty. The King left Cœuvres on the 11th of November to sleep at Château-Thierry.

The author of the *Amours du Grand Alcandre* and those who follow him state that shortly after this meeting Henry paid a second visit to the château of Cœuvres. They assert that, in order to throw himself at Gabrielle's feet, he traversed the enemy's lines disguised as a woodcutter, and that Gabrielle, with thoughts only for Bellegarde, received him with a very bad grace, and after a few sharp words retired, and left to her sister Diane the care of entertaining the King. The same writers tell us that Henry IV. persuaded Antoine d'Estrées to bring his two daughters to Court, which was, so they say, at that time being held at Compiègne, and that he there made a public avowal of his love for Gabrielle, and informed Bellegarde, rudely enough, that he had no desire for a companion in his love. It is said that he thought no task too hard might it but bring him a kingdom, yet his passion was dearer to him than all the crowns in the world. Bellegarde, thrown into grave confusion by the King's language and the gestures with which it was accompanied, promised his master to perform all he desired of him.

There is a certain amount of truth at the bottom of all this, and it is not difficult to separate it from

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the romance with which it is interwoven. It is certain that, after having seen Gabrielle at Cœuvre at the beginning of the winter, Henry IV. must have sought to see her again, and successfully, before the following spring. It is further certain that he took the necessary measures to induce Bellegarde to renounce any claims he might have on Gabrielle; but the statement that Gabrielle stayed at Compiègne seems to us very doubtful. Without a meeting at Compiègne the King was able to see Gabrielle again immediately on several occasions—during the siege of Saint-Quentin in December 1590; in January, about the 13th, at the time of his journey to Chauny; and again during the month of March, when Gabrielle, accompanied by her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, came to the King when he was encamped before Chartres.

Henry had at this time no Court in the proper sense of the term at all; the wives and daughters of his followers who came to his camp or to the town where he was temporarily established could hardly be said to constitute a Court. The visit to Compiègne was all the more difficult, inasmuch as the château was not at the time habitable. The King often passed through the town on his way to the west, and he would then occupy a house in the Place au Change, called l'Hôtel d'Arras or des Rats. He would arrive with a very small escort, travelling like a private individual, and make but a short stay; indeed, he was in the habit of passing from place to place with wonderful rapidity. The simplicity of his bearing and his modest retinue were

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in strong contrast with the customs of Mayenne and the other leaders of the League. The latter never went anywhere unless accompanied by a numerous escort of reiters or walloons, who despoiled and laid waste the country with every step they took. The town of Compiègne at this time afforded refuge to some old attendants of the late King, and as Henry IV. could not bear the body of Henry III. to Saint-Denis, which was in the hands of the Leaguers, he took it to Compiègne, and laid it in a chapel there. The town remained faithful to the King throughout the war, and in 1594, the year of the fall of Paris, the château was restored to its original owner, and the Hôtel des Rats abandoned.

IV

THE SIEGE OF CHARTRES—ALEXANDER FARNESE (1591-92)

GABRIELLE from her childhood had found a second mother in Madame de Sourdis. In 1591 the latter acted as her chaperone, and during their lifetime aunt and niece were never separated. At the beginning of the siege of Chartres, Madame de Sourdis had come with Gabrielle to the royal camp. They took a special interest in the subdual of Chartres. M. de Sourdis had once been Governor of the town under Henry III. and Lieutenant for the Chartrain country. When Chartres was in the hands of the League he took possession of the open country, and

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set up his headquarters at Bonneval. His chief at the time was the Chancellor de Chiverny.

In this, as in all civil wars, families were divided against each other. Although Madame de Sourdis's brother, Georges Babou de la Bourdaisière, had command of the town for the League, she prayed for the success of the King and the return of her husband to the governorship of Chartres, and of her lover, the Chancellor de Chiverny, to that of the Chartrain country. The inhabitants made a vigorous defence, replying, again and again, to the demands made on them by the King in language characteristic of the passions and high feeling of the times. Each time they declared that they were ready to open their doors to the King if he would become converted to the Catholic faith, but never would they recognise a heretic as their sovereign.

The Bishop of Chartres, Nicolas de Thou, was secretly on the side of the King, and belonged to the party of *politiques*. He must be numbered among those heads of the Gallican Church who, in alliance with the magistrates, did as much by their brave resistance to Rome to save France from the rule of the Spaniard as was effected by the swords of Henry IV. and his followers. These patriot prelates gave their support to the direct descendant of Saint Louis, Huguenot though he was, trusting to his word that he would later allow himself to be instructed in the true religion. They bore the excommunications of the Pope undisturbed rather than they would assist Rome in seating on the throne

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of France a Spanish Infanta who was married to a German Prince.

The King's men fought valiantly, and, as was always the case, Henry did not spare himself. During the dancing and merry-making which, according to custom, took place on the return from the trenches, the King would openly pay court to Gabrielle. The town capitulated on the 15th of April, and on the 19th opened its gates, and M. de Sourdis was restored to his former office.

According to tradition, it was then that Gabrielle became the mistress of the King. It seems certain that Henry at this time courted her assiduously; but if his sighs and prayers were favourably listened to it is difficult to explain why he left her so entirely alone for the several months that followed. But certainly we must date from this time the lively affection in which he ever afterwards held her.

After the siege of Chartres Gabrielle withdrew to Cœuvres, and Henry busied himself in levying foreign troops and appealing for help to all the Protestant powers. On his own nobles he could not rely. Only with great difficulty could he get them together for a siege or a battle. As soon as the fight was over they would disperse, and seek their homes, without caring in the least what happened to the King. Their indifference had again and again deprived him of the fruits of his success. To obviate such losses in the future he borrowed money right and left, mortgaged his kingdom of Navarre, and sold the rights of the

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duchy of Vendôme to enable himself to hire mercenaries.

On the 16th of July he betook himself to Picardy and while waiting for the foreign troops, whose arrival he was hourly expecting, he drew near to Cœuvres and to Gabrielle. On the 25th he laid siege to Noyon—a siege undertaken, according to de Thou and Sully, 'at the earnest entreaties of Mademoiselle d'Estrées.' The town capitulated on the 19th of August, and was put into the hands of Antoine d'Estrées. Here we see the first signs of Gabrielle's influence over the King.

After the capture of Noyon, Gabrielle returned to Chartres, and was present at the baptism of a son of Madame de Sourdis, which was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony at the cathedral. Madame Catherine de Soissons, Abbess of Chelles, was godmother to the child, and the godfathers were her nephew, the Cardinal de Bourbon, and the Chancellor de Chiverny. The good people of Chartres had the pleasure of witnessing the brilliant festivities given by their Governor on this occasion in honour of the illustrious godparents of the new-born infant.

Henry remained in Picardy all the autumn, and the troops that he had hired came in to him very slowly. At length, in the plain of Vandy on the 29th of September, he passed in review—*la monstre* the review was called at the time—14,000 Germans and 6000 English. October and November were spent in making sure of both banks of the Seine above and below Paris. In order to isolate the

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capital he encamped before Rouen on the 24th of November, and laid siege to it. Besides the troops we have mentioned he had with him 6000 Swiss and 4000 men of his old French and Gascon regiments. He was also joined by a considerable number of noblemen, so that his army amounted in all to a total of 35,000 efficient fighting men.

Never before had he been able to get together so numerous a body. The taking of Rouen was the more important in that it threatened Paris with famine, and if Rouen capitulated the submission of the whole province was assured. Villard was in command of Rouen for the League, and his authority extended over Havre, Elbœuf, and all the towns of Upper Normandy. Henry was thus playing for the greater part of his kingdom, and with good hopes of success. Mayenne, the Chief of the League, being without troops, was in despair, and he made an urgent appeal to the King of Spain for an army wherewith to raise the siege of Rouen and revive the drooping spirits of the League. But it was not until January 1592 that the Spanish troops, with the Duke of Parma at their head, crossed the frontier.

This was the second time that the Duke had left the Low Countries at the orders of Philip II. to succour the League. In 1590 he had compelled Henry IV. to raise the siege of Paris, and now in 1592 he returned to force him to raise the siege of Rouen. Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, was the son of Margaret of Austria, the natural daughter of Charles the Fifth, who governed the Low Coun-

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tries for the Emperor. He came of a good school of strategy, having first held arms at Lepanto under his uncle, John of Austria, and having served Spain bravely from the age of twenty-eight on every field of battle. He too had governed the Low Countries, but now, old before his time (he was born in 1544) dropsical, gouty, and discontented—the fact that he had been unjustly accused of the loss of the invincible Armada still preyed upon his mind—he thoroughly disapproved of Spanish intervention in the affairs of France, and above all of intervention as understood by Philip. France was not a country on which it was possible to make any lasting impression by constantly curtailing subsidies and arming only 15,000 or 20,000 men. But Philip was still a slave to ambition, and in spite of the fact that financially he was completely ruined, he still hoped to satisfy it, notwithstanding his total lack of means. Farnese knew that he would never listen to reason. He had been brought up at Madrid with Don Carlos and Don John of Austria, and could read him well—a Prince who gave his confidence to no one, and who, suspicious of all, set spies upon his best servants, even though they were of his own family.

But, being an obedient servant, Farnese entered France in mid-winter with 13,500 infantry and 4000 horse, and joined Mayenne at Guise with 700 knights furnished by himself and 2000 Swiss mercenaries in the pay of the Pope.

On the 20th of January, the King, hearing of the approach of the enemy, left Darnetal, where he

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had his headquarters, and went to meet the two Dukes, leaving the conduct of the siege, already far advanced, to the Maréchal de Biron. Had Biron served the King conscientiously, and continued the attack as vigorously as when Henry himself was present, the town should have capitulated in under eight days. But Biron never pressed the besieged hard, never followed up a success; he seemed rather to be trying to prolong a struggle which made his services necessary. While the King's army consisted very largely of noblemen, with no thoughts beyond a valiant fight and a quick return to their own lands, it also contained a nucleus of true soldiers of fortune who lived on warfare and looked to it for all hope of advancement. Too speedy a success on the King's part only rendered them useless.

While those in whom he was obliged to place confidence were thus betraying it, the King was skillfully checking the advance of the Duke of Parma, who throughout the campaign made use of all the resources of the military tactics of the time. He steadily refused to give battle to Henry, being unwilling in an enemy's country to run the risk of taking the field, and perhaps of destroying his army by some decisive action. He well knew that with each day's delay Henry's forces lost heart. The Duke circled round Rouen in the hope that he might escape the King's vigilance, and, by throwing himself upon Biron, bring help to the town. The King, however, succeeded in warding him off, but whenever he marched out to attack, the Spaniard retired.

On the 24th of February a sortie was made from

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Rouen, and Biron met with a severe defeat. The King had in his turn to retire before the Spaniards, and return to the help of the besiegers, whom he had left in so fair a way to victory. Unfortunately, at this juncture, a party of nobles abandoned him, and he was compelled to raise the siege. When he had united the troops from Rouen with those which until then he had been employing against the Duke of Parma, and made an urgent appeal to the nobles of all his provinces, he found he still had some 23,000 men under his command; whereupon he proceeded to follow in the Duke of Parma's footsteps, and, having now no longer to cover a siege, he inflicted upon him five successive defeats near Yvetot. He was on his way to Rouen, in the hope of completely destroying the Duke's army there, when he was again hindered by the sluggishness of Maréchal de Biron, and several other nobles who were following the Maréchal's unfortunate example.

'Do you want to go and plant cabbages at Biron?' asked the old Maréchal of his son when the latter expressed surprise that his father should refuse him 500 horse to put the Spaniards to rout at Ranson.

On the 16th of May the Duke crowned the campaign, so well conducted on both sides, by a bold manœuvre. Driven into a corner by the Seine, he seemed no longer to be able to escape Henry. But in the night the Duke threw a bridge of boats over the river opposite Caudebec, and sent his army across, covering their retreat with a body of troops which he commanded in person. He was himself

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badly wounded, but he made good his escape, and reached Paris by the aid of forced marches.

Before he went Farnese sent word to Henry, asking him what he thought of his manœuvre. The King, who had lacked neither skill nor valour, but felt himself abandoned by fortune and betrayed by his generals, replied, bitterly and somewhat unjustly: 'I call it flight.'

This was the second time that the absence of good faith on the part of those around him had deprived him of the fruits of success at the moment when they seemed to be within his grasp. They had prevented him from capturing Paris, and now they set themselves against his continuing his attack on Ranson, and so destroying the Spanish army. The well-timed retreat of the Duke of Parma was a very severe blow to the royal cause. The army of foreign mercenaries and nobles from every province, which had been raised by such heavy sacrifices, now began to melt away, and after a campaign which had begun so brilliantly, Henry, abandoned by most of his soldiers, found himself in an extremely critical position.

Villard had command over two-thirds of Normandy; the Duc de Mayenne was holding Bretagne for the League, and had just received an additional contingent of 5000 Spaniards; and all the other provinces were divided between Mayenne and the King. The latter, with but a very poor army, could not any longer think of attacking Paris.

It was when things had reached this critical state that the *tiers-parti* was formed, members of which

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were recruited even from the royal camp itself. Among them could be numbered princes of the blood; and the most zealous of all was the Comte de Soissons, whom the King had once destined to be the husband of his sister Catherine. The formation of this party was the more dangerous in that it offered satisfactory solutions to many of the difficulties of the moment. According to their programme, the brother of the Comte de Soissons, the young Cardinal de Bourbon, was to be proclaimed King; he was to leave the Church, and, after having been absolved by the Pope from all religious ties, was to marry the Infanta of Spain. In him they saw the Catholic King who was to bring peace to the kingdom; on the other hand, his marriage with the Infanta was looked upon as a sufficient recompense to Philip for all the sacrifices he had made on behalf of France.

How was the Huguenot Béarnais, who never saw a day go by but it brought him news of some fresh defection among his people, to continue the struggle against these new enemies, who seemed an even greater menace to his hopes of success than the Leaguers?

V

GABRIELLE'S MARRIAGE

IN the midst of all these difficulties, and when it seemed as though everything were combining to crush him, Henry received a blow that struck at

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his most intimate affections. Gabrielle in Picardy, separated from the King during his long campaign, urged by her family and persecuted by her father to accept a marriage suitable to her rank, seems, in spite of his tears and entreaties, also to have forgotten him who was betrayed by fortune on every hand, and consented to marry the Sieur de Liencourt.

This is the account given in the *Amours du Grand Alcandre* of their marriage and the events which led up to it:

‘Henry’s love for Gabrielle became greater every day. It was a source of grave anxiety to her father, and she herself turned her thoughts to marriage as a release from the tyranny of parental authority. A nobleman, who was rich and of good family, but ill endowed as to graces of person and of mind, offered himself for the alliance. Gabrielle, having assured the King that he could rely on her faithfulness, made him swear that on her wedding day he would come and take her away to a place where she need only see her husband when she liked. But the day passed and the King, unable to abandon some important enterprise, failed to put in an appearance. Gabrielle swore again and again that she would be revenged on him and never consent to gratify his desires; so that her husband, thinking to establish his authority more firmly in his own house than in the town where he had married her, and where the Marquis d’Estrées was Governor, took her away; but she took with her so many of the ladies of her family, who had been present at her wedding, that

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he found that it was still impossible for him to have any wishes that were not hers. Not long afterwards the King came to the nearest town and sent for the husband, who brought his wife with him, thinking that at any rate he would by so doing gain favour at Court. On leaving the town the King took her, and her sister and her cousin with him, and went off to attack the town of Chartres.'

So much for romance; let us now turn to history.

Never at any time was Antoine d'Estrées a *père complaisant*; never did he lend a hand to intrigue, and it was long before he pardoned his daughter when she openly became the King's mistress. In fact, in a letter from the King to Gabrielle, dated the 26th of June 1593, we read these significant words: 'I thought you were at Saint-Denys but I suppose you have been kept away by your father. I am very glad you are again on good terms with him and you shall reproach me no more for having to suffer his anger on my account.'

The father determined to take advantage of the King's absence, and rescue her from Henry's influence by marrying her. Being unable any longer to entertain the idea of uniting her with Bellegarde he turned his thoughts to a husband in the neighbourhood. His choice fell on a very rich noble of ancient family, whose first wife, Anne Gouffier de Crevecœur, a cousin of Antoine d'Estrées, was long since dead. Nicolas d'Amerval, Sieur de Liencourt, Baron de Benais, Seigneur de Cerfontaine, etc., was thirty-six years of age, a man of short stature, and ill formed. His character was weak, and indeed he

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was not in any way fitted for the rôle which Antoine d'Estrées destined him to play. It is easy to understand with how little enthusiasm Gabrielle must have entered upon this marriage; but children of her day respected the authority of their parents, and in due course she yielded to her father's commands.

The marriage took place at Noyon in the early part of June 1592.

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I

THE ASSASSINATION OF MADAME D'ESTRÉES (JUNE 1592)

ABOUT the time that Gabrielle's marriage was being celebrated at Noyon, perhaps even on the same date, her mother was assassinated during the night of the 8th or 9th of June at Issoire in Auvergne, together with the Marquis de Tourzel-Alègre.

The Marquis had been her lover for several years. The origin of their liaison is as follows:—the father of the Marquis, Antoine d'Alègre, Baron de Meillaud, killed François du Prat, Baron de Thiern, in a duel. Guillaume du Prat, Baron de Vitteaux, revenged his brother by killing Antoine d'Alègre. The Marquis d'Alègre was still very young at the time of his father's death; and three years later, in 1576, he was sent into Germany by his uncle, Yves d'Alègre, who had made him his heir. The nephew went in place of the uncle, who, together with the Comte d'Escars, had been promised as hostage to the Prince Palatine as a guarantee of the payment of the reiters which the Prince had sent to Henry III. The King appears to have forgotten all about his hostages,

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for the young Marquis was not able to return to France until the year 1583. His uncle had died during the seven years of his absence, and he had to undertake lawsuit after lawsuit in order to regain his heritage, which had been usurped by his cousins. When not thus engaged his mind was for ever turning on thoughts of revenging his father's death, and fitting himself to meet the Baron de Vitteaux. Brantôme depicts us this Baron as a terrible duellist, whose victims it was no longer possible to number, and tells us that the young Marquis since his return from Germany had become much skilled in the use of the sword under a celebrated professor of the time, one Jacques Ferron by name, of the town of Ax, 'who,' says Brantôme, 'had been my instructor.' It was on the 7th of August 1583, according to L'Estoile, that the two adversaries met in a field behind the Chartreux at eight o'clock in the morning. They fought bare-chested, in their shirt sleeves. The Baron, lunging at d'Alègre, dealt him two such forcible blows that he was forced to recoil, and Vitteaux then proceeded to cut and slash in all directions. But d'Alègre parried all his thrusts, and, biding his time, at length, with a well-timed lunge, overthrew his adversary, and pierced him through and through—*sans user d'aucune courtoisie de vie*, as Brantôme says.

The Marquis d'Alègre, in avenging his father's death, had, without knowing it, given great satisfaction to Madame d'Estrées, for his victim had in earlier days assassinated a lover of Madame

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d'Estrées, of whom she was very fond, the handsome du Gua, Colonel of the Guard to Henry III.

On learning the issue of the duel and of the death of Vitteaux she summoned the young hero to her side, overwhelmed him with presents, and from that time openly became his mistress.

We are thus able to fix 1583 as approximately the year when Madame d'Estrées, having already passed her fortieth year (she was married on the 14th of February 1559), abandoned her husband and children, and went to live with d'Alègre.

A year later she gave birth to Gabrielle's youngest sister, Françoise, who married the Comte de Sanzai, after having originally been intended for Biron.

It was a public scandal, and the birth of the child in adultery a very grave matter for the husband. Antoined'Estrées took the precaution to take certain measures against his wife; notably, on the 27th of November 1586, by an act drawn up by Laclef, the notary at Cœuvres, he deprived Françoise Babou of any benefits which she might have inherited as his lawful child.

D'Alègre was chosen by Henry IV. to be Governor of Issoire in Auvergne, his native country, and took possession of his governorship a little after Easter in the year 1590. Madame d'Estrées rejoined him with her two youngest children and a large retinue of servants. This woman, already old, whose manners still gave evidence of the freedom and licence of the Court of Henry III., living openly as she was with a young man who was not yet thirty, caused much scandal in the little

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town of Issoire. Members of the League who dwelt in the provinces lived far purer lives than the Leaguers of Paris. The evil example of the Lorrains, unscrupulous, grasping, and ambitious, did not penetrate into the heart of France, nor were the simpler people able to fathom their aims and endeavours. In a town like Issoire at this time all the good Catholic families belonged to the League. It is easy to understand that the new governor, although of that country, could hope to rally to Henry's cause but a very small number of the more respectable of his people. He had indeed only been able to keep the place true to the King by allying himself with a local clique made up of bravoës and men of low and obscure origin, at the head of whom were the brothers Auterouche, the Lirons, a butcher called '*le grand* Bessand,' Blezin, and other desperadoes who had become the terror of the town.

The avarice of the Marquis d'Alègre, who, after the custom of the time, was determined to grow rich out of his governorship, was only equalled by the rapacity of Madame d'Estrées. Gloomy discontent reigned among their adherents, who could certainly have had no interested motives to induce them to stay by such a Governor. From motives of economy d'Alègre had no guards and paid no garrison; the men belonging to his clique were the masters, and guarded the gates of the town themselves. D'Alègre himself was lodged in a humble dwelling that went by the name of the *Maison Charrier*, and took no precautions for his personal safety.

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His extortions exasperated the people, and his unpopularity began to weaken the influence of the clique that was attached to him. In June 1592 the brothers Auterouche decided to rid themselves of him and to continue to hold the town of Issoire for the King without a Governor. During the night of the 8th or 9th of June twelve assassins, with the Auterouches at their head, entered the Maison Charrier by a back door, gained entrance to a gallery upon which the bedroom occupied by d'Alègre and Madame d'Estrées opened, and placed a petard against the door. Madame d'Estrées was the first to wake. 'I smell a burning match,' said she. At the same moment d'Alègre, hearing a noise, jumped from his bed, and began hurriedly to pile the furniture against the door to nullify as much as possible the effect of the petard. While he was thus engaged the explosion took place, and d'Alègre was seriously wounded in the arm. Notwithstanding this he snatched up a partisan, which he always kept at the head of the bed, and entered upon a desperate struggle with the assassins. The unexpected resistance took them by surprise, and he seemed to be gaining an advantage, when Blezin, one of the assailants, suddenly threw himself upon him, and pierced him with his dagger. Madame d'Estrées sought refuge in the sleeping apartment of her women, but Bessand tore her away from a bedside. 'Alas, gentlemen, would you kill the women as well?' 'Yes,' replied the butcher; 'the bitch with the dog'; and he struck her a blow on the left breast to

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which she immediately succumbed. The murderers seized everything, down to the unfortunate woman's night-dress, and flung her dead body naked into the market-place, together with that of her lover. At daybreak the inhabitants of the town came out to see the results of the bloody work. On the next day Liron had the bodies taken up and sent to Meillaud, where they were buried.

At this time of civil war, and against a band of such miserable wretches, the friends and relations of d'Alègre had no hopes of obtaining redress from the King for this atrocious crime. To have held an inquest would have been to hand the town over to the Leaguers. His friends, however, took the matter into their own hands. Liron the younger, having been imprudent enough to leave the town, was killed in the country, in the house of one of his relations. Desrieux, a friend of d'Alègre's, despatched two resolute men into the town, who shot down Liron *père* and Vidal Auterouche. The same friend, as he was crossing the market-place of Issoire one day, came upon Jean Auterouche, and killed him with his own hand. Not content with this, Desrieux, who had arrived on that day with a goodly company, seized three other assassins, and had them hanged on the spot. The others saved themselves by leaping over the ramparts.

Such was the condition of France that Henry IV., three years after his accession to the throne, was unable to avenge the murder of one of his governors, occurring in a town given over to his authority.

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II

GABRIELLE LEAVES HER HUSBAND (1592)

WE left Gabrielle on the point of installing herself with her husband at the château of Liencourt, near Nesle. We have already mentioned that she was married at the beginning of June. Two documents relating to the date of her marriage still exist, but it is difficult to reconcile the one with the other.

At the time of the proceedings for her divorce she was interrogated, as has already been said, on the 17th of December 1594 by the magistrate at Amiens in regard to the time of her marriage. Gabrielle replied that it had been celebrated at Noyon two years and three months before, in a chapel of the principal church of the town. This takes us back to the month of August 1592.

This date is confirmed in d'Amerval's interrogation. It is, however, incorrect. We have discovered two most important documents on the subject which have led to the modification of our earlier opinions: two letters from the King, from which we extract the following:—

'The bestowal of Assy and Saint-Lambert upon Madame Gabrielle d'Estrées. June 10th, 1592. Henry, by the grace of God King of France and of Navarre, to the loved and loyal members of our Council. . . . This is to make known that we wish to render thanks to our loved and loyal Knight of

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Saint Michael and the Holy Ghost, Captain of fifty men-at-arms, the Sieur d'Estrées, our Lieutenant-General in the Isle-de-France, for the great services he has done to our predecessors and to us on various occasions, and desiring, by reason of the services aforesaid, to gratify our dear and well-beloved Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées his daughter, wife of the loved and loyal nobleman of our chamber, the Sieur de Liencourt, we hereby give and bequeath our estate and manor of Assy in the dependency of our Earldom of Marle, together with the house, woods, meadows, grounds, mills, farms, and the seignorial rights and privileges and all appurtenances such as they are and such as ourselves and our tenants have always enjoyed. Also we bequeath to the aforesaid Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées our château of Saint-Lambert, with the whole of our ancient demesne and patrimony, to have, to hold and to possess during her life-time. . . .

'Given at Liencourt this 10th day of June, of the year of grace 1592, and the 4th of our reign.

'HENRY.'

This letter can be seen in the Bibliothèque Nationale on the original parchment.

Gabrielle, then, was married before the 10th of June, and evidently a few days before, for this gift of Assy and Saint-Lambert is a wedding gift from the King, following quickly upon the news of her marriage. The King's itinerary indicates his presence at La Fère on the 7th of June and at Clermont on the 11th. From the above document we can add to this itinerary that he was at Liencourt

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on the 10th. It would seem that Gabrielle was mistaken in her answer to the magistrate. She should have replied that she had been married two years and six months, and not two years and three months.

The two estates bestowed on Gabrielle by Henry remained in her possession. In 1598 she herself bestowed them on César de Vendôme on the occasion of his betrothal with the daughter of the Duc de Mercœur.

This act of generosity on the part of the King immediately after Gabrielle's marriage suggests the following reflections:—Gabrielle must have become Henry's mistress at the time of the siege of Chartres. She easily persuaded him to follow her into Picardy and lay siege to Noyon. The long and unfortunate Normandy campaign kept them apart. Henry must have been an utter stranger to her marriage, which was contracted by her father. Gabrielle resisted it as forcibly as she could, and made pressing appeals to the King, but in vain. Henry, engaged as he was in the struggle with Farnese, was unable to respond to them. As soon as the latter took the road to Paris the King hastened to Gabrielle; but he did not see her again until after her marriage, at her husband's house at Liencourt, and could only bestow Assy and Saint-Lambert upon her as a consolation for the pitiful state to which she had been reduced.

Gabrielle maintained, moreover, throughout the divorce proceedings, that she had been married at her father's instigation and against her will; she cited this fact as one of her three reasons for considering her marriage void.

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One of the witnesses at the trial, the *Sieur du Fay*, ensign in the regiment of Picardy, who was a page in the house of the *Marquis d'Estrées* at the time of the marriage, declared before the judge that he had heard *Gabrielle* say: 'Ah, well, they wish me to marry him [speaking of *d'Amerval*] and to put me out of the way; I will do it, but it will be against my will.' He also declared that they had little satisfaction from the marriage; in fact, from the time that they first broached the subject she did nothing but weep and lament.

As for the tale of *Henry's* being detained on an important enterprise, and thus prevented from carrying off the bride on the very night of her wedding; as for *Gabrielle's* refusal to sleep with her husband; as for her aunt and her cousins preventing the latter from exercising his rights—these are all pure fabrications, to which *Gabrielle's* own statement gives the lie.

'When interrogated concerning the day of her wedding she replied that she believed that a blow or some disease had rendered her husband impotent. She also said that she had no quarrel or dispute with the aforesaid *Sieur de Liencourt*, and as long as they were together they had lived peaceably, and earnestly did she desire that things might have been different, especially as she had not loved him before.'

Thus it appears that *Gabrielle* submitted to being married against her will; that she stayed in Picardy with her husband at *Liencourt*, near *Noyon*; that for three months she endured the miserable

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experience of living with a husband who was impotent. In all this we have evidence of the sweetness and gentleness of her character: husband and wife spending the three months peaceably, and her wish that things might have been different, especially as she had not loved him before, for she could then have become resigned to her fate.

Her father must have congratulated himself on the good use he had made of his authority. He had torn his daughter away from Henry and married her to a rich nobleman. He could not have foreseen d'Amerval's unfortunate fall, nor its consequences, for his son-in-law had had four children by a former wife; but it seems that Antoine d'Estrées was no more destined to keep a protecting hand on his daughter than on his wife. After three months of a miserable existence spent at d'Amerval's side, in the month of September 1592, Gabrielle left her husband, and in company with her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, rejoined Henry and never left his Court again.

III

WAS D'AMERVAL DE LIENCOURT 'UN MARI COMPLAISANT'?

ACCORDING to tradition it was Henry himself who chose for his mistress a husband at once venal and complaisant, so that she might be set free from her father's irksome authority, and the author of the *Amours du Grand Alcandre* upholds this tradition.

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According to him it was Gabrielle who, to rid herself of paternal authority, wished to be married, and Henry who thoroughly approved of her action and promised to prevent any consummation of the marriage. It must be remembered that most of his contemporaries accuse Henry of himself choosing a husband for his mistress. In support of this opinion is the fact that Monsieur Berger de Xivrey has adopted it in his very interesting memoir published, many years ago, in the *Bibliothèque des Chartes*. With regard to this marriage, brought about by the King's will, he writes: 'We are to-day at a loss to reconcile this strange amalgam of a concession made to the proprieties obtained by means which flatly contradict them, and, so far from lessening the scandal, only serve greatly to increase it. In other times a greater recklessness would have been devoted to an intrigue or more adroitness and a greater air of mystery.'

In absence of all proof, is not this 'strange amalgam,' this 'flat contradiction,' only a strong argument against the opinion that attributes to Henry an extremely questionable action? To what complications were not the two lovers of their own accord exposing themselves? And is not the petition for the dissolution of her marriage, presented two years later, a proof that Gabrielle had been coerced by her father to marry d'Amerval de Liencourt, and that Henry, whom we see so eagerly following the suit, had no hand whatever in the arrangement of a marriage which was in later years so great a source of annoyance to him?

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Here at any rate is the summary of the arguments used by M. Berger de Xivrey—(1) The Sieur d'Amerval de Liencourt married Gabrielle by order of the King, who paid him the price of his complaisance in money. This is gathered from a letter drawn up by a notary and signed by Henry IV.; (we will examine it farther on).

(2) Later, after the birth of her first child, Gabrielle wished to annul her marriage, and addressed herself in the first place to the magistrate at Noyon and afterwards to the magistrate at Amiens. At the request and injunction of the King, de Liencourt, complaisant to the end, sacrificed himself anew to Henry's will, and gave his consent to the dissolution of the marriage, as appears from his last will and testament.

In support of the first statement, that Liencourt consented to play the part of a *mari complaisant* and was well paid for his willingness, the following is cited:

'At Clermont, in Beauvoisis, on the morning of Friday, June 12th, 1592, in the King's palace, and in the presence of two royal notaries, Henry IV., King of France and of Navarre, acting more particularly in this place as Comte de Marle, Seigneur de la Fère, gave full power to the nobleman, Philippe de Longueval, Seigneur de Manicamp, Director of His Majesty's affairs in the county of Marle, to sell and to dispose of, entirely and for ever, the estate and manor of Falvy-sur-Somme with all its appurtenances and dependencies, powers and privileges, with no exception, on behalf of and for the advantage

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of Messire Nicolas d'Amerval, Seigneur de Liencourt, Knight of Saint Michael and the Holy Ghost, Gentleman of the Chamber, formerly governor of the town and bailiwick of Chauny . . . for the sum of 12,000 écus, in discharge of a debt of 8000 écus advanced to His Majesty by the aforesaid Sieur de Liencourt while he was Governor of Chauny, to pay the garrison of that town and for the repairing of the fortifications and keeping them in order for the King's service *as he duly put it before His Majesty, who holds himself content and satisfied therewith.* . . . The remaining sum of 4000 écus to be delivered into the hands of maître Jullien Mallet, Councillor, Treasurer and Receiver-General for His Majesty for the house of Navarre.'

The document is signed by the King and counter-signed by M. de Loménie, Secretary of State for the affairs of his kingdom of Navarre.

M. Berger de Xivrey sees in this a hidden generosity on the part of the King, and he draws his conclusions from the fact that the document is dated the 12th of June 1592, a date near to that of Liencourt's marriage with Gabrielle, and also from the phrase in italics, from which it appears that the King is satisfied with what the Sieur de Liencourt has *duly put before him*, and has not thought it necessary to submit his claim to any further formality or financial verification whatsoever. We are in justice bound to add, in support of this theory, a fact of which M. Berger de Xivrey seems not to have been aware—namely, the liberal gift that the King made to Gabrielle on the 10th of

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June in bestowing upon her Assy and Saint-Lambert.

But these arguments do not convince us. In the first place the procurator chosen by Henry to settle the price with d'Amerval was Philippe de Longueval, Seigneur de Manicamp, nephew to Antoine d'Estrées, a man whose character in no way lent itself to such a mission. As a matter of fact, when later, in the beginning of 1594, during the siege of Laon, Henry wished to find a residence in which to lodge Gabrielle d'Estrées, he applied to this very Seigneur de Longueval, but he, with great firmness and dignity, refused to admit a mistress of the King into his house for all that she was his cousin. It is not therefore likely that he would have lent himself to act as an intermediary in a negotiation which carried with it but little honour, and we must admit that Philippe de Longueval was more likely to give a true estimate of the character of the procuration than M. Berger de Xivrey. We cannot, moreover, understand how so moderate a sum came to be employed to buy so wealthy a man as d'Amerval; and finally, in the light of generosity, what is the meaning of an exchange that seems to indicate a commercial transaction, and which resulted in a sum of 4000 écus being brought into the royal coffers?

There is yet another argument against this interpretation of the reason for the handing over of the manor of Falvy—and a stronger one. We know that Nicolas d'Amerval was Governor of Chauny from 1590 almost up to the time of his marriage. It is therefore natural enough that when d'Amerval

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quitted the governorship there should be a settlement of the expenses he had incurred. There is every reason to believe that these expenses were genuine. All the municipalities and all the governors during this period made advances to the King. The royal finances were in a very sad state, and Henry would not have been able to keep the field at all except by borrowing, while every governor defended his town out of his own resources. It is therefore most improbable that d'Amerval, rich as we know him to have been, was the only governor of his time who did not have to make war at his own expense.

During this period of 1590 to 1592 the Leaguers were scouring the country round Chauny in all directions. We read that towards the end of 1591, when d'Amerval was still Governor, the garrison of Chauny attacked, without success it is true, the *Sieur de Rieux*, governor of *Pierrefonds* for the League, who passed close to Chauny on his way to *Noyon* to revictual his army. A few days later *La Chanterie* renewed the struggle. He was less fortunate than the *Sieur de Rieux*, for he was surprised by the garrison of Chauny, and his troops were scattered. And again, before the end of the year 1591, the Leaguers, wishing to avenge *La Chanterie*, endeavoured to take Chauny by surprise; but the attempt ended in positive disaster, for they fell into an ambush. A large number were taken prisoners, and 300 horses were brought in by the garrison. Naturally d'Amerval did not remain inactive during this period. He certainly

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could not make war without funds, and as Henry was not in a position to supply him he was compelled to make an advance to the King out of his own private means.

We see further that in 1592 Henry not only settled matters with d'Amerval by yielding him the Manor of Falvy, but he also settled with the municipality of Chauny and paid back the advances of money and supplies that had been made during the same period for his own army. By granting to the inhabitants of Chauny the right to levy a tax on all the wines of their territory he gave them an income of some 10,000 francs. The town enjoyed this revenue for ten years, until the year 1602, receiving in all about 100,000 francs. Thus, to pay the Governor of Chauny, Henry gave up a part of his own private property in consideration of a certain sum of money, and in order to pay the municipality he relinquished a portion of the revenues of the Crown. Does not all this point to the penury of the royal treasury, and does not the balance of 4000 ècus, paid over to Henry by d'Amerval, remove all idea of the exercise of any generosity? We see, in short, how impossible is the interpretation that has been put upon the procuration, and what contradiction that interpretation receives in the light of incontestable facts.

Monsieur Berger de Xivrey finds another argument in support of his theory in the fact that Henry did not submit the claim to any financial formalities, and that he was satisfied with what Liencourt *duly put before him*.

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In the first place we notice that the terms of the procuration in no way exclude the idea that it was an account of expenses that had been put before the King, together with all corresponding vouchers, in regular order. And further we see that the Sieur de Liencourt was not paid out of State moneys, nor by the surrender of a fief of the Crown, but by the surrender of a manor belonging to Henry and forming part of his private demesne. It was thus that in many cases the Béarnais paid expenses which the royal treasury was unable to meet. We see him forfeiting the manors of his duchy of Vendôme one after the other, so that by the year 1598 it was but an empty title. Cæsar, who became Duc de Vendôme, in later years bought back all the forfeited lands with the dowry of Françoise de Lorraine. In this particular case it was a manor of his earldom of Marle that Henry forfeited; the Court of Accounts had no title to interfere in any way whatever; it was the act of a private individual, Henry 'acting more particularly in this place as Comte de Marle and Seigneur de la Fère,' as is stated in so many words.

There are, furthermore, other considerations that lead us to disbelieve that d'Amerval was selected by Henry as a shield to cover his intrigue with Gabrielle. Such husbands are always overwhelmed with favours, but it was not so with d'Amerval: his governorship of Chauny was taken away from him, and nothing given him in its place. He makes a claim for moneys paid by him in the service of the King, and his claim is met,

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but in so niggardly a fashion that he is actually asked to refund a certain amount of ready money to balance the transaction. He does not appear at Court, but retires into Picardy, where he resides now at his château de Liencourt, near Noyon, and now at his estate at Jumelles, near Amiens. He is given no office, the command of no regiment; and finally, when Madame de Liencourt has a child, he does not play the rôle incumbent on men in his position, of giving his name to the new-born—on the contrary, there is now no thought but of getting rid of him, and a petition is presented for the dissolution of a marriage upon which, two years before, he had been paid to enter! Henry even went further; so far, in fact, as to persuade him that if he opposed the suit his life would be in danger. What, then, was his value to the King? How was his assumed 'complaisance' made use of? For this very unlikely story of Gabrielle and the King choosing d'Amerval as a means of escape from the tyranny of the Marquis d'Estrées let us now substitute another: let us but assume that it was the father who induced his daughter to marry and all will be quite naturally explained.

How can we, moreover, in reason admit that Antoine d'Estrées, who was so long in pardoning his daughter for becoming Henry's mistress, was at the time of her marriage an accomplice of the king's and gave his sanction to a shameful union with a venal husband? The father's sanction was necessary, and it was certainly given in 1592; for had it not been, Gabrielle would two years later

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assuredly have cited the fact as an additional reason for the cancelling of her marriage vows. And what can be the significance of the assumption that Henry's idea in marrying her was to rescue her from her father's tyrannical authority? Is not the authority of the husband over the wife as fully armed by the law as that of the father over his child? If it sometimes happens that a woman marries in order to be more free and to have greater facilities for her misconduct it is only with the idea of greater secrecy, and above all of concealing the consequences of her misdeeds, surely never in order to live openly with a lover.

When in later years Henry received Mademoiselle d'Enragues into his household as a mistress he did not for an instant think of getting her married. One can understand a prince finding a husband for a mistress whom he is anxious to cast off in order to provide for her future, but what one cannot understand is that Henry should intentionally raise up obstacles between himself and Gabrielle such as the existence of a husband was bound to present, no matter how yielding and compliant. Do all these arguments, at once so simple and yet so convincing, receive the lie from the procuration quoted above? We must confess that we are of opinion that they do not.

But for all that, we are convinced that, had the part of *mari complaisant* been offered to d'Amerval, he would not have refused it, and for proof we quote the following clause in his will:—

'I give and bequeath to Charlotte and Marie

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d'Amerval, my two daughters, the whole of my real and personal estate, acquired conjointly with my wife, *and I wish there to be included therein* all that has been acquired by Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées, my wife, since we have been joined together in marriage.'

Now, since his wife had already left him for more than two years when he wrote these lines, it is evident that d'Amerval intended his two heiresses to benefit by the generosity of the King.

The amount that his wife Gabrielle had received by December 1594 was already very considerable. When she was still living with her husband she had received on the 10th of June 1592 the estate of Assy and the château of Saint-Lambert in Picardy, as we have just seen.

In the course of the year 1593, after she had left d'Amerval, the King had paid her a sum of 50,000 écus out of his kingdom of Navarre.

On the 2nd of February 1594 Duplessis-Mornay, acting as steward to the house of Navarre, sold the estate and forfeited the overlordship of Vandeuil to Messire d'Escoubleau de Sourdis, Bishop of Maillezai, the eldest son of Madame de Sourdis, and cousin-german to Gabrielle — 'the aforesaid manor of Vandeuil belonging to His Majesty's ancient private demesne . . . '—for the sum of 50,000 golden crowns, which, according to the contract, was paid in ready money through the hands of the clerks of Messire Jullien-Mallet, Treasurer-General of the house of the ancient demesne of Navarre.

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A few days later the Bishop made a statement that he had acted as the purchaser of the manor of Vandeuil on behalf of Gabrielle d'Estrées.

Her income was augmented by a monthly pension paid by the King for the maintenance of her house. This pension, which in 1593 amounted to 400 écus a month, was increased to 500 on the 1st of February 1594, by royal letters patent dating from Mantes. In 1596 it amounted to as much as 1000 écus a month.

Henry made during the month of April 1594 other liberal gifts, which were as follows:—

On the 8th, in a commission addressed by His Majesty to the Treasurer-General of France, at that time established at Rouen, he is informed that the King has given and granted to the aforesaid lady 'all and sundry of the moneys due to him and proceeding from the special taxes levied upon the country and duchy of Normandy, by his lieutenants-general and others, up to and including the year 1593, for ammunition, forage, rations, provisions, gun horses, soldiers' pay, impositions on goods and merchandise, and in general on all accounts, of what nature soever, excepting only the general taxes of the realm.'

These taxes seem to have been difficult to collect, for we see that on the 8th of November of the same year Gabrielle obtained a second manumission from the King, addressed to the magistrates-in-ordinary of the Court of Accounts at Rouen, and ordering them 'to collect the said taxes, as his Majesty had commissioned and deputed them.'

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On the 18th of the same month of April 1594, by royal letters patent bearing the countersignature Forget, Gabrielle received the sum of 21,033 francs from the moneys proceeding from the salaries invested on the receivers of the realm, newly conferred and augmented.

On the 22nd she is again favoured with 2200 francs, 'to be derived from sums brought in by the sale and additional costs of lawsuits in the duchy of Normandy, cognisable in the Parliament of Rouen.'

On the 30th of April the King made over to her by deed of gift sums 'paid to his lawyers out of the revenue on bonded salt, all except 10,000 francs which His Majesty gave to the Comte de Thorigny.'

We will bring this list of gifts belonging to the year 1594 to a close by quoting from royal letters patent dated the 31st of August, and again bearing the countersignature Forget, in which there is conferred on Gabrielle 'all and sundry of the moneys arising from the sales, amended and supplemented, heretofore effected, of all the waste lands and other demesnes of the duchy of Alençon and earldom of Evreux, belonging to Monsieur, the King's brother, lately deceased.'

It becomes evident that by the 12th of December 1594, the day on which d'Amerval wrote his will, a very considerable fortune had already accrued to his wife.

These gifts, it is worth noticing, came from a different source as time went on. In 1592 it is the private property of the King which provides Gabrielle with the estate of Assy and the château

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of Saint-Lambert. In 1593 it is the kingdom of Navarre which furnishes the 50,000 écus of her so-called dowry. In February 1594 the King furnishes her with the manor of Vandeuil, again from his own lands. From the time of Gabrielle's first pregnancy (Cæsar was born on the 7th of June 1594) it is the State that pays. The time of this change coincides with the surrender of Paris, which took place on the 22nd of March 1594. The gifts we have mentioned are thus the first of this kind that were made, and the first found among Gabrielle's papers after her death.

But to return to d'Amerval, his will and his venality, and the appropriation into his patrimony of the wealth acquired by his wife since her marriage. We know of no documents which relate to the settlement of Gabrielle's reprisals after her divorce. But in reality d'Amerval's hopes were vain; he never derived any profit from his alliance with Gabrielle, unless it were that he was paid what was due to him from the King for the expenses incurred while he was Governor of Chauny.

IV

GABRIELLE'S FIRST APPEARANCE AT COURT

GABRIELLE's departure from her husband's roof was facilitated by the proximity of the King. He stayed at Noyon from the 9th to the 16th of September. On the latter date he writes: 'I shall sleep at Compiègne and to-morrow I shall be at Senlis; the day

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after to-morrow at Saint-Denis.' Gabrielle appears to have been with him on this journey, and from that time to have followed in the King's footsteps and accompanied the Court in every change of residence. 'The King would go, according to circumstance,' as Chiverny tells us in his Memoirs, 'now to Saint-Denis, now to Mantes, now to Chartres, followed by us, the members of his Council, or quite alone, according to the nature of his business.' The Court was therefore constantly on the move; it was held at Saint-Denis during the months of October and November of that year and at Chartres in December. It was during this period that Gabrielle made her first appearance on this little stage, where so many rival factions struggled for supremacy.

She seems from the very first to have been bent on enjoying her freedom—the freedom of a woman separated from her husband. A glance at Henry's letters to her shows us that the peace of the earlier days of their life together was soon disturbed. Gabrielle's feelings for the King do not appear to have matched his lively affection for her.

Twenty-eight authentic letters of Henry IV. to Gabrielle exist. The first sixteen were written during the year 1593. But these are but a very few that remain to us out of a correspondence that was carried on from day to day. No sooner were they separated than Henry sent message upon message to his mistress. Until the day of her death, with but few intervals, the King persevered in a most active correspondence, and Gabrielle was the re-

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ipient of his letters—letters which gave every evidence of the depth of his passion.

The oldest letter, according to the classification generally adopted, is dated the 4th of February 1593; its correct place has, however, not been assigned to it.

The long and important letter classed with those of the end of December 1594 by the learned editor of the *Lettres Missives*, a letter which reveals the storms of the early days of Gabrielle's appearance at Court and the King's complainings, belongs in reality to the end of December 1592, and should be taken as the first of the series.

The end of the year 1592 and the beginning of the year following should thus present us with twenty-seven authentic letters, several of which afford us a glimpse of the clouds that cast a shadow over the relations between the two lovers. We are thus able to make a true estimate of the circumstances which drew forth complaints from the King and which have been used against his young mistress so malevolently, the evil therein often being aggravated to so great an extent as to result in total misrepresentation.

At the end of October and the beginning of November 1592 the Court was stationed at Saint-Denis. Towards the month of December the King had to leave Saint-Denis, rally his soldiers, and go to meet the Duke of Parma, who was entering France by way of Picardy. On the death of this Prince, which came so unexpectedly on the 2nd of December, his army dispersed, and the King re-

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turned incontinently to Senlis and Saint-Denis, where all the members of his Council and the people of his Court had remained. He arrived on the 9th of December.

Gabrielle and Madame de Sourdis left before the 10th of the same month for Chartres, and the King did not rejoin them until the 20th; but from that time the whole Court remained at Chartres until the month of February of the following year, in spite of several absences on the part of the King.

With the help of the King's letters we will now examine the first visit of Gabrielle, clouded as we shall see it was by several storms, some due to the jealous feelings of the King and others raised by Gabrielle's tardiness in starting for a town where the King lay awaiting her, her indifference as to when she should arrive, and the want of any regularity in her correspondence.

We must not forget, in the first place, that Gabrielle was at this time not yet nineteen, and that, even if her unscrupulous and ambitious aunt had thrown her into the King's arms and advised her, as she probably did, to abandon her husband and come and play a brilliant part at Court, Gabrielle was perhaps, at the bottom of her heart, still seeking for an opportunity of seeing the Duc de Bellegarde again—the man whom she had once hoped to marry and the lover of her young days.

It must be added that Henry was twenty-one years older than Gabrielle, and Bellegarde at this time thirty years of age.

Her thoughtlessness and inexperience no doubt

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led Gabrielle to commit mistakes which her enemies were not slow in using against her with the King.

As for Bellegarde, he was as a rule detained either in the army or in one of his provinces, but he would appear at Court when the King was away, with the evident intention of seeking out Gabrielle.

Thus we see that Henry's aim was to win Gabrielle's affections, and above all to make her forget Bellegarde, a task in which he was in the end entirely successful.

V

THE KING'S GRIEVANCES

HENRY'S grievances against his mistress, expression of which is to be found in his letters, are of such a kind as to lead us to divide them into two categories in order to avoid the confusion into which so many writers have fallen, including even M. Jung in his interesting work on Henry IV. as a writer. This author attributes certain reproaches made by Henry to jealousy, whereas they have in reality quite another origin.

The first letter, and a jealous one, to be considered is the long one wrongly placed as belonging to the end of December 1594, the original of which is to be found among the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale. It contains the most serious charge—in fact, the only serious charge—that can be brought against Gabrielle, so often accused, and unjustly, of having been unfaithful to the King.

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It runs as follows:—

‘There is nothing that confirms me more in my suspicions, or serves more to increase them, than the way in which you conduct yourself towards me. Since it pleases you to command me to banish all suspicion, I will; but you will not take it ill if, in the openness of my heart, I tell you the grounds on which I suspect you, inasmuch as you appear not to have understood certain things that I have laid to your charge, openly enough as I thought,—or so at least I judge by your replies. It was for this reason that yesterday I began my letter with the words: “There are none so deaf as those who will not hear.” In the first place, I assure you, my dear mistress, that the grudge I had against you has left no lingering bitterness in my soul, now that I am more than satisfied with the pains you have been at to set my heart at rest; I only speak to show you what just grounds I had for my suspicions.

‘You are well aware that I was offended at the journey taken by my rival. Your eyes have such power over me that they saved you half my complainings; you satisfied me by the mouth, not from the heart. But had I known then what I have learned since, at Saint-Denis, of that journey, I should not have seen you and I should have broken with you altogether. Yet I would sooner burn my hand than write this to you, and cut out my tongue than that such words should be spoken.

‘You know how little you have done since I saw you. Have you banished the cause of our disagreement, as I hoped you would? Which of your pro-

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mises have you fulfilled? By what faith can you swear to me, you who have broken faith for a second time? You complain of my suspicions, yet take no offence at the perfidy and want of faith of others; 'tis indeed a grave injustice.

'You send me word that you will keep the promises that you made me erewhile. Just as the Old Testament was superseded at the coming of Our Lord, so have your promises been set aside by the letter that you sent to Compiègne. One should speak of doing, not of going to do. Make up your mind then, I pray you, mistress, to have but one servant. It lies with you to make me a different man, with you to please me; you do me wrong if you think that anyone in the world could serve you with a greater love than mine. Nor could mortal man be more faithful. If I have ever been unwise and indiscreet, think but of the folly that is committed in the name of jealousy, and do you blame yourself! Never before has mistress given me cause for jealousy and never have I known man more discreet than I. Feuilemorte has, out of dread for the Leaguers, made it known that he is not my friend, and that he is not in love.

'So much do I long to set eyes on you that I would cut off four years of my life to see you as soon as this letter, which now I bring to an end, kissing your hand a thousand times. And so, alas, you think me unworthy of your picture?'

This letter is written on ordinary small folio paper, in the King's own fine, even hand. It bears neither heading nor date nor signature, and it com-

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pletely covers all four pages of the double sheet, without margin or blank spaces; there are three erasures, and the words 'at Saint-Denis' are inserted between the lines as an afterthought.

The letter was folded longways, and sent in another sheet, which served as envelope and bore the address. The first page is a little dirtied and rubbed, as if it had been long in the pocket.

The first thing to notice on reading the letter is that Cæsar was not then born, since there is no allusion to him whatever, and we know how passionately fond of him the King was. It is not likely that he would have offered to break off with Gabrielle, as he did, without a word as to the fate of the child.

Now, if the letter belonged to the December of the year 1594, Cæsar would have been seven months old, and from that time onward the King was constantly occupied with thoughts of his future.

The editor of the *Lettres Missives* has forgotten in making his classification that during the month of December 1594 Henry was at Amiens with Gabrielle, who was suing for her divorce from d'Amerval, and that the King, while appearing to have made the journey for the purpose of putting in order his affairs in Picardy, had really come to hasten the proceedings, and to rescue his little son from any claims that d'Amerval, his father in the eyes of the law, might choose to make on him.

During this month of December Gabrielle divided her time between Amiens itself, where she anxiously followed all the vicissitudes of her suit, and the

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château of Picquigny, where the King sought to amuse her by engaging a band of violin players to 'rejoice her heart' (see a letter dated the 18th). They were living together in very great intimacy, and their little Cæsar, to whom Henry was so passionately attached, served to draw them still closer together.

On the 27th of December they both came to Paris, and it was actually in Gabrielle's room in the Hôtel du Bauchage, at the very moment when a crowd of gentlemen were pressing forward to salute the King, that Jean Châtel glided in amongst them and attempted to assassinate him.

This letter, then, does not belong to the December of the year 1594, nor is it in any way connected with the important events which had by that time come to pass. It speaks of Saint-Denis and of Compiègne at the time when Paris was taken and the Court established there, when Cæsar was born, when Gabrielle had ceased to think of Bellegarde and was thinking only of being married to the King, and when her former lover was openly paying court to Mademoiselle de Guise.

But while it is an easy matter to conclude that the letter does not belong to the December of 1594 it is not so easy to assign to it its correct date. Nevertheless, we believe that we have discovered it.

In the first place there is in the text an indication of the town in which it was written: ' . . . what I have learnt since, at Saint-Denis. . . ' Now from the month of March 1594—that is to say, from

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the time of his entry into Paris—the King made no further stay at Saint-Denis.

It is likewise quite impossible to consider the letter as belonging to a time subsequent to the birth of Cæsar (on the 7th of June 1594), for from that time on the King's love for Gabrielle became greater every day and the expression of his affection more pronounced. We must even go back to a time prior to the 16th of June 1593, for from that date until Gabrielle's death there is neither letter nor document of any kind indicative of the existence of any discord between them. The King's love seems to have grown with the years. This letter must, then, be removed from this period of calm happiness and relegated to that of suspicion and jealousy, before the 16th of June 1593, together with other letters of the same character. This anxiety with regard to the sentiments of his mistress is shown even in the letter of the 9th of February 1593, in which he writes: 'Only the existence of a rival can change my love.' On the 15th of April, when his jealousy is already on the wane, he writes: 'Those fair words . . . banish all my former suspicions, deep rooted as they were!' And his jealousy is quite gone by the 16th of June, when he writes to Gabrielle from Dreux: 'So certain am I of your love. . . .'

This letter, in which he seems consumed with a most bitter jealousy, must have been written before the 9th of February—that is, in the December of the year 1592, not 1594—for only on that assumption can everything be quite naturally explained. Henry

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was at Saint-Denis at that date. He returned, after a short absence, from an expedition against the Duke of Parma on the 9th, or at latest the 10th, and sought out Gabrielle, who had remained there with the Court. Explanations followed with which the King was not satisfied. Gabrielle then left for Chartres with Monsieur and Madame de Sourdis; and Henry, who remained at Saint-Denis, writes: 'Since it pleases you to command me to banish them entirely [his suspicions] I will do so; but you will not take it ill if, in the openness of my heart, I tell you the grounds on which I suspect you, inasmuch as you appear not to have understood certain things that I have laid to your charge, openly enough as I thought. . . .'

Charitable friends have thought fit to malign her. ' . . . But had I known then what I have learned since, at Saint-Denis, of that journey, I should not have seen you and I should have broken with you altogether. . . .'

The serious charges brought against her are, in the first place, the visit made by his rival Feuille-morte,¹ as he calls Bellegarde, to Saint-Denis during his absence; and secondly, the fact that Gabrielle had written a letter to this rival at Compiègne. This is at least the only way in which we can explain the passage: 'As the Old Testament was superseded at the coming of Our Lord, so have your promises been set aside by the letter that you sent to Compiègne.'

¹ The colours 'pain bis,' 'cuir tauné,' 'feuille morte' were then in fashion, and Bellegarde was something of an exquisite.

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Perhaps Henry even intercepted the letter and read it: 'If I have ever been unwise and indiscreet, think but of the folly that is committed in the name of jealousy!' Then he tells Gabrielle to choose between him and Bellegarde. 'Make up your mind then . . . to have but one servant.' He gives himself a word of praise in passing, and disparages his rival, calling both his courage and his love into question; and he ends his letter in a very affectionate strain, 'kissing her hand a thousand times' and begging for her 'picture.'

Language of this kind belongs to the period we have indicated, and tallies in every respect with the other letters of that time.

Henry writes to her again in the February following a letter which, though written fifty days later, is an echo of the letter we have reproduced: 'I am constant,—only the existence of a rival can change my love.'

Four months later, on the 15th of April, he writes again: ' . . . Those fair words, uttered so sweetly as you were seated at the foot of your bed, towards the close of Tuesday night, banish all my former suspicions, deep rooted as they were!'

And indeed it would seem that the effect of 'those fair words' was complete, for on the 16th of June he says to her: 'So certain am I of your love. . . .'

If the famous jealous letter is relegated to its proper place—that is, to the beginning of their life together in December 1592—its expressions do not clash with the feelings we know him to have had at that time, and the letters assume a logical sequence.

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We will now examine the true significance of other letters of the same period, certain passages of which have been erroneously attributed to jealousy.

We have said that Gabrielle often came late, that she was tardy in starting on a journey, and an irregular correspondent. These failings, more than any others, must have worried Henry, who was activity itself, always hard at work, always surprising his friends, and above all his enemies, and who would write three letters where another would write one.

On the 19th of April 1593 he writes from Mantes :

'You assure me, by Arsoir, one of my lacqueys who returned quite late, that you will not fail to come, as you promised. The news consoles me much, hurried as I am with the work I find here to do ; but the bearer of the letter tells me later, by word of mouth, that you do not leave till Tuesday. The delay will kill me, for I dread the slowness of your coming. My passion must be my excuse, my sweet angel, for all my fears.'

On the next day, the 20th, he writes again :

'So it will be to-morrow, my dear love, that I shall kiss your fair hands a thousand times. . . . The hour of meeting draws near and I hold it dearer than my life; yet if you are late by but a single day, I shall not survive.'

She did not arrive. Henry did not die, but on the 21st he wrote :

' . . . Yesterday I had no news of you ; I know not what to think. If you linger out of respect for Easter-Day, I must tell you that I hold the day in

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no such respect. If from mere idleness, then you do me wrong. It is now mid-day and you have not come : it is far from the time when, by your promises, I was to expect you. *When will you learn to be true?* Not thus do I treat my promises.'

The phrase in italics has given rise to much discussion, owing to its having been considered apart from its context. It has been looked upon as proof that Gabrielle was unfaithful to Henry. If read as part of the letter it simply means that Gabrielle was always late, and never came on the day she promised.

On the 16th of June he again complains, although in gentler terms, of her irregularity in writing : 'I waited patiently for one whole day without news of you, for, in reckoning the time, I saw that it must be so. But when on the second day I did not hear I could only put it down to the sloth of my lacqueys . . . *for put the blame on you*, my sweet angel, I cannot. . . .'

On the 23rd of June he writes again, a letter that has also been misunderstood :

'I have discovered, only an hour ago, a way to complete your plate. See how thoughtful I am for you, while the least thing seems to make you forgetful of me. Had I not sworn to make no more complaints, justly might I cry. . . .'

And in reading the letter that follows we see that this promise on the King's part 'to make no more complaints' is, without question, only applicable to Gabrielle's tardiness and delay. Three days later, on the 26th of June, he writes to her from Dreux :

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'I have received the letter that it pleased you to write to me on the 23rd of this month. I thought you were at Saint-Denis, but you have kept away at your father's orders. . . . You say that if any of your letters have displeased me, then certainly this one will. But do you forget my resolution "to make no more complaints"? Nay, I will make another resolve: "'Never again to be angry with you.'" The first will keep me from importuning my friends, the second will uphold my spirit. . . .'

We are here dealing solely with Gabrielle's tardiness and her habit of delaying to start. In no way whatever do these resolutions, 'to make no more complaints,' 'never again to be angry,' apply to supposed unfaithfulness on her part. How indeed is it possible to believe that the King was able to shut his eyes to his mistress's misconduct, and later to think of making a queen of a woman who had openly deceived him?

There exist then, to sum up, three letters, in which Henry gives voice to his jealousy and tells Gabrielle of his suspicions. The first letter is very serious in tone, but we must be careful not to overrate the seriousness; the other two are but echoes of the first. These letters prove above all that Bellegarde, after Madame de Liencourt's arrival at Court in September 1592, from the first pursued her with his attentions, and came to Court during the King's absence to make love to her.

The six other letters, extracts from which we have given, relate in every case to Henry's second cause of

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complaint—namely, Gabrielle's idleness and natural dilatoriness.

In June 1593 all trace of jealousy has disappeared, Henry has completely won the affection of his mistress, and henceforward happiness and peace mark all their relations with one another.

The examination of this correspondence has brought us as far as the middle of the year 1593. We must now retrace our steps and relate what was taking place in Navarre at the time when Gabrielle was being married at Noyon.

VI

MADAME, THE KING'S SISTER

CATHERINE OF NAVARRE was born at Paris on the 7th of February 1559. She was taken shortly afterwards into Béarn, where she was educated in the Calvinist faith by her widowed mother, who brought her up strictly and with much wisdom. Her governess, Marguerite de Selve, Baronne Tignonville, was assisted in her duties by Mademoiselle du Perray and Mesdames de Fontrailles and de Vaux—all women 'whose whole lives were examples worthy of imitation,' as was said by Queen Jeanne d'Albret. She grew up in the Château de Pau, side by side with Jeanne du Monceau-Tignonville, who was married later to the Baron de Pongéas; with Corisande d'Audoins, who became Comtesse de Guiche; and with Louise de Châtillon, who was first married to Téligny, and afterwards, when left a widow by the

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massacre of Saint Bartholomew, to the Prince of Orange. Florent Christien and Palma Cayet instructed them in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; Charles Macrin in history and poesy; Mélin de Vaux, Espina, and on several occasions Théodore de Bèze, presided over their religious studies—so complete was the education that the daughters of the great Protestant houses received at that time.

Henry was five years older than his sister. The difference in their ages explains the great friendship which Henry always had for the Princess of Orange, his passing love for Jeanne de Tignonville, and his early abandonment of her for the beautiful Corisande d'Audoins, Comtesse de Guiche. Rosny, d'Aubigné, and Turenne were already by this time in attendance on him, as also, in an inferior position, was La Varenne.

The Princess of Navarre, who was destined from the first to be sacrificed to the political exigencies of the time, was at one time or another to have been married to most of the princes of her time—the Comte de Soissons, the Duc de Montpensier, King James I. of England, and the Prince of Anhalt. Among so many claimants for her hand she conceived a passion for her cousin, the Comte de Soissons, with whom she exchanged a promise of marriage.

Henry IV. at first looked favourably on their love, but later, when he realised that the services of the Comte de Soissons were not to be relied upon, he opposed the marriage. But Madame Catherine's passion increased, and she wished that the Comte de

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Soissons might carry her off and marry her in spite of the King's wishes.

Corisande d'Audoins had by this time been abandoned for Gabrielle d'Estrées, and bitterly did the high-spirited Béarnaise resent the King's desertion. She bethought herself how she might be revenged, and used the influence she still had over the friend of her childhood, the Princess of Navarre, to plunge her into an intrigue which bid fair to estrange the brother and sister for the rest of their lives.

Jeanne de Tignonville, Baronne de Pongéas, was ever ready to do an injury to the rival of her younger days. She had never been able to efface from her heart the image of the King nor the memories of the past, and she informed him of what was happening at Pau. Corisande had had the promise of marriage written out, and the Comte de Soissons was expected at Pau, where all was in readiness for the ceremony.

Henry thereupon wrote the following letter to the President of the Parliament of Pau:—

‘Monsieur de Ravignan, I have with great displeasure received the news concerning the expected visit to Pau of my cousin, Comte de Soissons. I will say no more than this, that if anything should come to pass against my wishes, to which you should happen to have given your consent, your head shall answer for it.

HENRY.

‘March 25th, 1592.’

The Baron de Pongéas arrived at Pau at the same time, armed with a King's order to arrest the Prince.

The château of Pau was the scene of many regret-

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table incidents. The Comte de Soissons, with drawn sword, at first offered a strong resistance. The Princess was held a prisoner in her apartments by order of the Sovereign Council of Béarn, and the Comte de Soissons had to leave Pau. Bitter complaints were made to the King by Madame, and Henry tried to appease his sister, asking her to come to him and establish herself at his Court. But not until the end of October 1592 did the Princess decide to leave Navarre, which she was destined never to see again. She arrived, after a journey not unfraught with danger, at Saumur, where she placed herself under the protection of Duplessis-Mornay, who was Governor of the town at that time. And there she found two devoted friends—Monsieur Duplessis-Mornay and the Duchesse de Rohan.

Henry was at that time ignorant of the fact, as indeed was all the world, that a definite promise of marriage, signed by his sister, still bound her to the Comte de Soissons, and that Madame de Gramont was holding this promise in safe keeping. Thinking the affair at an end the King had written in April of the year 1592 to M. de Ravignan, assuring him that he was satisfied with the way in which he had managed it.

The King had not seen his sister since the year 1585, when he had left her as Queen-Regent of Navarre. It may have been that he felt embarrassed at the thought of meeting her face to face after what had happened at Pau, or that weighty matters detained him, but the King did not come to Saumur, where Madame had settled since the beginning of

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the year 1593, until the 28th of February. After two or three days spent in each other's company, when brother and sister seem to have forgotten their serious disagreement with regard to the Comte de Soissons, Madame accompanied the King to Tours, where there was great rejoicing, and grand festivities were given by him in honour of his sister. The Court removed from Tours to Chartres, in order to be nearer Paris, for the Catholic heads of the King's party were attempting to enter into negotiations with the League.

It was during this sojourn at Tours that Gabrielle d'Estrées was presented to Madame. The latter made Gabrielle a present of her portrait, and in after years she spoke to the King of . . . 'the loss of so perfect a friend.'

It would appear certain that from this time these two women, Madame Catherine and the Princess of Orange, who had been friends from childhood, attached great value to their affectionate relations with Gabrielle, and that they thought, not without reason, that through her they might successfully uphold the interests of the Protestant party.

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I

THE STATES OF THE LEAGUE

AFTER the death of Henry III., who was assassinated at Saint-Cloud by Jacques Clément, all faithful royalists proclaimed the King of Navarre King of France. The all-powerful League, on their side, chose the Cardinal de Bourbon, but as he was in the hands of Henry IV., the Duc de Mayenne was elected to govern in his name. From the very first Mayenne promised to call the States-General together at an early date. Henry, on his side, made the same promise for the month of October 1589. An order of the Parliament of Paris, dated the 29th of November, fixed the meeting for the 3rd of February 1590 at Melun; another order called them for the 9th of March at Orleans. Civil war prevented either convocation from being held. The battle of Ivry, fought on the 14th of March 1590, enabled Henry to lay siege to Paris, and not until September did the Duke of Parma succeed in raising the blockade.

On the 29th of November 1590 Mayenne again convoked the States for the 20th of January 1591

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at Orleans. The siege of Chartres was the cause of the postponement of the meeting until the month of May, when it was fixed to take place at Reims.

Their one aim was the election of a king, and all Henry's efforts were concentrated upon frustrating that aim. A meeting at Reims was more to be dreaded than any other, for after the election the deputies of the League would have taken the new King to the cathedral, and there crowned him; and France, weary of the ravages of civil war, would undoubtedly have accepted their choice after such a ceremony.

A preliminary meeting took place at Reims. It was composed of the princes of the house of Lorraine, the ambassadors of Savoy and Spain, and the nuncio of the new Pope, Gregory XIV., who had recently openly declared himself for the League, and had sent the Cardinal Landriano to fulminate fresh excommunications against Henry. Diverse ambitions were represented. Philip II. claimed the crown for the Infanta Isabel, the granddaughter of Henry II. through her mother, Elizabeth of Valois. The Infanta was to be married to the Archduke Ernest, and they were to occupy the throne of France together. The young Duc de Guise put forward his claims in memory of his father; the Duc de Mayenne took advantage of the services he had rendered to the League for so many years; the Duc de Nemours recalled the splendid defence of Paris he had made against Henry IV. in 1590; the Marquis de Pont, eldest son of the Duc de Lorraine, based his claim on no other title than

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that of his birth and the ambition common to all the princes of his family ; while the Duke of Savoy reminded the States that he was the son of a daughter of France, and that he had already usurped Saluces and Provence.

These numerous pretensions frightened Mayenne, who was at heart a truer Frenchman than any of the others, and was willing to waive his claims in favour of one worthier than himself. He repeatedly endeavoured from this time on to treat with Henry.

By September 1592 only a very inconsiderable number of deputies had come in to Reims, and Mayenne decided to write to the Parliament of Paris to the effect that the States would meet at Soissons on the 20th of October. But Henry held possession of the open country, and the idea of Soissons was acceptable to no one. Thereupon Mayenne, becoming more and more afraid of the ambitions of Spain, decided to place the choice of a King in the safe keeping of the people of Paris and the States were called for the 20th of December at Paris.

On the 3rd of December the Duke of Parma died ; on the 13th arrived the Archbishop of Lyons, an ardent member of the League, and the Cardinal de Pellevé, Archbishop of Sens, a fanatic such as was bred in those troublous times, who, though a Frenchman, was a staunch adherent of Philip II., and died of rage and mortification at having to be present at the final triumph of the legitimate King. The deputies who had foregathered at Reims arrived at Paris, and at length the convening of

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the States, first of all put off until the 17th of January, did definitely take place on the 26th.

At the beginning of the year the Duc de Mayenne had published a declaration in which he invited all true Catholics to join with him in his endeavours to establish a firm rule over the country. He even hinted that there would be no difficulty in accepting Henry of Navarre as king if he would renounce the heresy which had done so much harm to France. Mayenne was ever the best patriot among the Leaguers—a position, it must be remembered, which was not very difficult of attainment.

The danger for Henry was very great, for the least understanding between the rival claimants jeopardised his cause, and he strained every nerve to prevent the deputies from meeting. A royal declaration was issued, threatening all who presented themselves at the convening of the States with the direst penalties. His own Parliament at Châlons issued an order in which it was declared that the town in which the States was held and a king chosen by the League would be razed to the ground.

These threats had one unfortunate result: the more moderate and the more timid stayed at home, and the Leaguers, braving all dangers, came alone, and thereby ensured their majority.

On the day when, with Mayenne as President, the States were opened, there were no more than a hundred and thirty deputies to represent the whole of France. The reunion took place at the Louvre, in the great hall on the first floor, which

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lies in front of the King's apartments and is reached by the Grand Staircase.

And what was this reunion? Languedoc had not sent a single deputy; the clergy and the *tiers-état* alone were represented; the nobles absented themselves in a body. There was present neither a prince of the blood nor an officer of the Crown, nor a president of Sovereign Court—those who sat under these titles had been but recently invested in their dignities by Mayenne.

The latter took his seat beneath a dais of cloth of gold, mounted upon a platform. The princesses occupied a gallery in the rear; behind the Duke, on the platform, was grouped a numerous suite. On the right, on an isolated chair, sat the Cardinal de Pellevé. In front of the platform stood a table at which the Secretaries of State sat facing the deputies, who occupied the body of the hall. On the right of the platform were the clergy, and on the left the nobility, represented by a single member, the Seigneur de Viarme, 'clad in a fur robe, who, although in no way a true deputy, sat by himself on one of the benches set apart for the nobility.' Between the two were the deputies of the Parliament, the Council of State, the Court of Accounts, and, farther back, the deputies of the *tiers-état*.

Mayenne and the Lorraine pack, now on the lookout for their quarry, had the decency to refrain from seating themselves on the fleurs-de-lys. The princes, as counsellors of the Parliament, and the delegates of the States-General, had always taken

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their seats on benches covered with purple velvet embroidered with golden fleurs-de-lys, and the pillars of the halls in which they met were always hung with similar material. At the States of the League the hall and the seats were draped in crimson velvet.

Mayenne himself opened the proceedings. According to the official report of the *tiers* 'he put before them, in beautifully chosen words, the cause and occasion of the convocation. . . .'

The Cardinal de Pellevé spoke next, using similarly well-chosen words, and 'thanked the Duc de Mayenne profusely, and then proceeded to discourse on past events, talking both of France and of Rome. . . . Among other things he informed them that the Holy See Apostolic had sent a sum of 600,000 écus to France in support of the wars. . . .'

L'Estoile, in his journal, relates how the Duc de Mayenne, very much moved, thereupon harangued them, speaking in such low tones that many did not hear him at all, and often changing colour as he spoke. Madame de Mayenne on leaving the meeting remarked to her husband that she feared he must have been taken ill, as she had noticed him turn pale three or four times. As for the Cardinal de Pellevé, who spoke on behalf of the King of Spain and of the Papal Legate, the historian de Thou maintains that he prattled like an old man, and said many things that were both useless and irrelevant. After these two speeches all rose, intending to meet again on the following day.

On the same day the King on his side, in vindica-

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tion of his rights, made a declaration, dating from Chartres on the 29th of January 1593, to the effect that the Salic Law was to be rigorously upheld.

On that day a resolution was also signed by the princes, prelates, officers of the Crown, lords, gentlemen, and other Catholics on the side of the King.

At the sitting of the States on the 4th of February, the Papal Legate was allowed to address the deputies and to give them his blessing. On the same day, after the Legate and all strangers had withdrawn, Mayenne informed the assembly 'that he had lately received, at the hands of a herald of the opposing side, a resolution from the princes, prelates, officers of the Crown, and principal Catholic lords, who were as much in the counsel of the King of Navarre as others nearer his person, which expressed the hope that an understanding might be arrived at with a view to the establishment of that state of rest which was so essential for the preservation of the Catholic religion and the State.' It was a reply to Mayenne's declaration of the 5th of January, and contained a proposal for a conference. After it had been read in a loud voice 'the Sieur de Mayenne requested the aforesaid assembly presently to advise him whether it was expedient to make a reply thereto, and if so what reply he should make.

The herald who had come from Chartres was Thomas Lhomme. The Cardinal de Pellevé remarked at the top of his voice that if they took his advice they would administer the whip to the herald, to teach him to refrain in future from taking upon him such ridiculous business.' The assembly, how-

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ever, took the proposal seriously, and debated on it during several sittings. In spite of the strenuous opposition of the Spaniards, or, to speak more exactly, of the deputies in their pay, the proposition was finally agreed to, and the conferences held at Suresnes were the outcome of that agreement.

The decision arrived at by the States was that 'no communion whatever be made with the King of Navarre or any heretic; only would they confer with the Catholics who were upholding his cause, for reasons affecting their religion and the State; on no account would they consider any proposal to establish a heretic King upon the throne.'

From this time onward our interest is transferred from the States to the conferences opened in the little town of Suresnes on the 29th of April by the deputies of the States and the Catholic lords who were on the side of the King. The debates at the Louvre, the arrival of the Duke of Feria, the Spanish Ambassador, his reception of the States, his intrigues, and the money he scattered broadcast among the deputies for the purpose of gaining their votes in the supposed coming election of a King, had no other result than to stir the kingdom to its depths. The really important business was being transacted outside Paris. There, in the name of the King, all true Catholics came together, and affirmed that the heir to the throne was about to return to the Catholic faith, and in consequence there existed no longer any reason against recognising him as King of France and eldest son of the Church.

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The only reason for the existence of the Leaguers was the prevention of the heretic Henry of Navarre from reaping his heritage. Under this pretext they governed, they filled the offices of State, and they played havoc with the finances of the country. The possibility of the King's conversion threatened to thwart their plans and put an end to their shameful excesses, and for as long as ever they could they entrenched themselves behind subtle arguments such as the most insincere casuist might employ ; but at length, when they found they could hold out no longer, and at the express instigation of Spain, they declared, and the States with them, that they would not accept the conversion of the King, nor hold it good, until our Holy Father the Pope had admitted the King of Navarre within the pale of the Catholic Church. So certain did they feel that never, in the light of the statements made by Spain and her adherents, would the Pope grant absolution to the Béarnais.

Suarez de Figherra, Duke of Feria, representing Philip II., had arrived at Paris on the 9th of March. On the 28th of May he proposed to the States-General that they should offer the crown to the Infanta Isabel, daughter of the King of Spain, and granddaughter, through her mother, of Henry II. of France. He asked them in the meantime to appoint as king the Archduke Ernest of Austria, to whom the Infanta was betrothed. This proposal was not well received ; and the Duke of Feria, realising that the States would never be brought to agree to it, on the 10th of July proposed to the chiefs of

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the League that they should choose the young Duc de Guise.

Fortunately, there were still to be found, even in Paris, Frenchmen patriotic enough to stand up bravely and resist a surrender to a foreign power which threatened the throne of France with a German dynasty. The Parliament, which had always at heart desired the succession to be in the hands of the descendants of Saint Louis, but had not always had the courage to avow its predilection, at length asserted itself, and on the 28th of June 1593 'gave notice that all the Chambers were agreed never to elect any foreign prince or princess to the throne of France, since that would be going directly contrary to the Salic law and the fundamental laws of the realm.'

II

THE ABJURATION OF THE KING

THERE were certainly Protestants who hoped that Henry's accession to the throne would, in submitting France to the Protestant yoke, be the triumph of the reformed religion. Others, of a more moderate disposition, looked to see the King drive out the Spaniard, and, when thoroughly master of his own kingdom, hold an equal balance between the two religions. But first the League and its allies had to be stamped underfoot.

Henry IV., most just and most tolerant of princes, favoured the more moderate programme.

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He had now been King of France for four years, and in spite of his bravery and his indefatigable energy he had not yet been able to enter his capital. Day and night, summer and winter, he had held to the open country, and he had not yet conquered one half of his kingdom. The States of the League had been sitting at the Louvre for several months, and might any day elect a king who would be under the influence of Rome and of Spain as soon as they came to an understanding and found courage to commit themselves to so serious an act. Defection was thinning the ranks of those who had for four years upheld the lawful heir, and his position was becoming more and more critical every day.

Henry was well aware of the danger of his position. He found an outlet for his energies in incessant journeyings from place to place, going from Chartres to Dreux, to Mantes, to Compiègne, to Saint-Denis. Unable to enter Paris he circled round it; while within the town his bitterest enemies were gathered together, and were deciding his own fate and the fate of his kingdom.

He felt that his followers were falling away from him on all sides, and he was well aware that on the day of the election of a king, even though he should be a foreigner, his Catholic friends, who were to-day urging him, and crying 'To Mass, to Mass,' would forthwith abandon him.

A typical example of such a follower was the Chancellor de Chiverny. This high magistrate gives us a naïve description of himself in his Memoirs: 'At the time of my joining Henry IV. I had to

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contend on the one hand with my feelings of affection and obligation towards the State and the obedience I owed to the King and on the other with my just fears for His Majesty's success. For nearly the whole of France, with a very powerful army at her command, was against him, and the King's religion was also against him, and unless he changed it it was impossible to guarantee him the kingdom. . . .'

It seems that he would keep faith only until the time of the King's conversion, and yet he was one of those who could still be counted on, and one of the last to withdraw his allegiance. Others at this time thought of nothing but of what they might get out of the strife and for what price they might sell themselves. The representatives of feudalism were quite willing to recognise Henry as their leader so long as he held his own in the struggle against fortune and paid them for their help. But once the States elected a Catholic King, blessed by the Pope and supported by Spain, their swords would be at his disposal, and from him would they demand their share of the spoil.

With regard to the Chancelier de Chiverny, although Henry could make a fairly good estimate of the extent of his devotion, he was bound to the Bourbon cause through his office, and he was in reality a very important factor in the ultimate success of the Béarnais. He had for many years past contracted an alliance with Madame de Sourdis and her husband which was intended to make the fortune of the two houses. They both belonged to the same

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province, and their estates adjoined one another. We have seen that from the accession of Henry III. Chiverny had been governor and lieutenant-general of the town of Chartres and the Chartrain country for the King. When he united himself with Henry IV. he still kept his governorship, with the addition of that of the Orleans country. Under Henry III. M. de Sourdis had also been governor of the town of Chartres and lieutenant of the province.

Madame de Sourdis had always exercised a great influence over her niece, Gabrielle d'Estrées. She had been devoted to her in early days, and later it was she who had almost driven her to become Henry's mistress. Her influence over Gabrielle was at this time the justification of the bond existing between her and Chiverny. Their greed and their ambition were very great, but in 1593 the time of reaping had not arrived; as yet they could only wait and watch for the seed they had sown to bear fruit.

Chiverny had repeatedly and with great insistence urged the King to allow himself to be instructed in the Catholic religion and become a convert, maintaining that at this price only could Henry escape utter defeat, and that at no very distant date.

The King stood out against his Chancellor as against others, and as indeed he stood out against the demands of Paris and of Chartres and of so many other towns. 'Become a convert and we will open our gates to you,' said they. His refusal always meant the prolongation of the siege, and the

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King's authority was thus perpetually kept in check.

Then Gabrielle d'Estrées intervened. She needed no instigation ; her interest in the King, no less than her affection for him, had long since opened her eyes. She would indeed have been blind had she not seen how in 1593 Henry's little Court was fast dwindling away. Lack of money, the coldness of his old companions, the imminent desertion of those of the clergy who had remained faithful, occupied the minds of all. The sight went to Gabrielle's heart. It was Henry's habit at all times to keep her informed with regard to his affairs, and from her he must have received, if not the advice of a superior intellect, at any rate encouragement such as is inspired by love and community of interests. He could talk to her open-heartedly.

'She opened his eyes to his people's misery,' says Mezerai, 'and to the likelihood there seemed of his having to spend the rest of his days under arms, amid the fatigues, the turmoil and the hazard of warfare, far removed from repose and the blessings of a quiet life.'

D'Aubigné, who from the first fell a victim to her beauty and her charm, disapproves, as strongly as Mezerai, of the part she played in the King's conversion. He was of those who still dreamed that Protestantism would prevail. The conversion was to him an act of treason committed against the people of France, and in that act Gabrielle was the King's accomplice. 'But more powerful argument than all was the Marquise de Monceaux, soon to be-

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come Duchesse de Beaufort. At the beginning of her liaison with the King, the Marquise would have about her none who did not hold communion with the Reformed Church. She was for ever praising the trustworthiness of those who did hold it and complaining of the tyranny which the Catholics exercised over the King,' and beseeching him to persevere in his religion. 'But when the hopes of attaining to royalty by marriage were presented to this lady and it was borne in upon her that not all the ministers in the world could dissolve her former marriage, save only the Pope; then did she entice and cajole him, in the manner of those who, having changed their opinions, boast that they have very carefully sifted their earlier convictions, and, from that time on, with the aid of her great beauty, at all convenient hours of the day and the night, she encouraged him in his leanings towards the change.'

Yet d'Aubigné pardoned Gabrielle, but Henry he never forgave. He had been boon companion to the young Prince of Navarre. At Nérac, as at Casteljaloux, they had taken part together in those somewhat extravagant farces which in earlier days were played in Gascony. Later he became equerry to the King of Navarre, and as one of his lieutenants he shared his dangers without, it is true, exposing his life. From the time of the conversion this friend, who had seemed to have so much in common with the King, became an angry censor, an unceasing recriminator, a bitter satirist, with long face, and beard cut in the manner of the

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stubborn Protestant preachers of the time. He joked no more, and his preaching became an annoyance to the King, who was compelled to bid him keep away.

Gabrielle could not herself have had any very strong religious convictions. Granddaughter of Jean d'Estrées, who was for several months a Protestant, brought up in a family in which the conduct of the women was at no time very edifying, she could never, any more than Henry, have gathered from the lessons of her childhood those principles of true piety which influence us through life, no matter how far we go astray. Compared with her, Henry was a godly man; on the last day of his life we see him, in the afternoon, stretched on his bed, reading a book of devotion, before stepping into that coach in which Ravailac stabbed him.

If he was to be converted at all he was determined that it should be done seriously.

At the moment of accomplishing the solemn deed he wished to have Gabrielle by his side, and wrote to her as follows:—

‘I arrived early last night and was importuned by the priests until bedtime. We believe that peace will be concluded this day. As for myself, I am in the hands of the Leaguers. I am to speak with the bishops this morning. In addition to the troops demanded for your escort yesterday I am sending you fifty trusty Arquebuses. The hope that I have of seeing you to-morrow stays my hand from writing more to-day. On Sunday I take the perilous plunge. At the moment of writing to you, a hundred

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troublesome people are hanging round my neck, —they make me hate Saint-Denis as much as you hate Nantes. Farewell, my heart; come early to-morrow, I beg. . . .

‘(Given at Saint-Denis, this 23rd of July).’

‘On Sunday I take the perilous plunge. . . .’ Is there in this phrase an ill-timed joke, an instance of his merry humour? We think not; what he meant in all seriousness was that he was about to do a deed surrounded with peril.

While the conferences were going on at Suresnes the deputies of the States had sent a reply to the announcement of the impending conversion of the King, saying that they would not consider it unless the Pope gave it his sanction. Now, Pope Clement VIII. was at this time still a bitter enemy of the King and a devoted friend of the League and of Spain. He had excommunicated Henry and declared in a monitory letter that he was not capable of reigning. Great danger lay in a conversion if the Pope refused to sanction it, for it would not satisfy the Catholics, and it would only serve to alienate the Protestants.

It was not, therefore, without considerable hesitation, and it was with a full understanding of the danger of an act which might indeed be a death blow to the plans of his enemy, but which might on the other hand serve as a stepping-stone to their ambitions if his sincerity came to be doubted, that Henry chose Saint-Denis as the town in which the religious conferences preceding his conversion should be held. He summoned to his side the princes and the

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officers of the Crown, the heads of Parliament, and those of the great nobles who were still faithful to him; he wished them all to witness the great deed.

On the 22nd of July he left his sister at Mantes and established himself at Saint-Denis. Although on the one hand strongly encouraged by Gabrielle, he was on the other bitterly reproached by his sister, who would not hear of changing her religion, and who regarded the King's approaching conversion with feelings of desolation.

On Friday the 23rd the King called together the Archbishop of Bourges, Grand Almoner of France, the Bishops of Nantes, of Chartres, and of Mans, and the Bishop of Perron, the celebrated theologian, and Bishop Elect of Evreux. The conference lasted from six o'clock in the morning until one in the afternoon. History has preserved for us a list of the principal points they discussed. It is interesting to note the doubts that especially troubled the King. In the first place, he interrogated the theologians on the worship of the Saints. 'Must one pray to all the Saints?' demanded Henry. The bishops replied in the affirmative, and developed the doctrines of their Church on this point. 'Is Auricular Confession necessary?' he then asked. Again the reply was in the affirmative. His third question turned on the authority of the Pope. 'To which they answered that he had absolute authority in all matters spiritual, and that, in regard to temporal matters, he could interfere, to the prejudice of the liberty of kings and kingdoms.' When they came to a discussion of the Eucharist and the Real

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Presence, Henry said: 'Here I have no doubts, for I have always believed it. 'The Bishop of Mans then proceeded to sum up all the dogmas of the Church, and the King 'promised to conform entirely to the faith of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church.'

At the same time that Henry was pursuing in all sincerity at Saint-Denis the study of those points in which the Catholic Church differed from his own, the Cardinal de Plaisance, papal legate to the States, published on the 23rd of July a printed exhortation addressed to all the Catholics of France. It declared the King's conversion to be of no account, and forbade both laymen and ecclesiastics to be present at Saint-Denis on the occasion of the forthcoming ceremony, or to respond in any way to the appeal which the King had made to all to come and witness the great deed. The exhortation had no effect whatever, and the people of Paris betook themselves to Saint-Denis in crowds.

The ceremony took place on Sunday, the 25th of July, at about nine o'clock in the morning, in the presence of a mighty gathering of people of every rank. The King was dressed in white satin doublet and hose, with white silk stockings and white shoes, and wore a cloak and a black hat. He was supported by the princes of his family, the officers of his crown, and a large number of nobles who had responded to his appeal. His guards led the way with the beating of drums, their ensigns flying in the wind. The church was richly decorated, the streets hung with tapestry and strewn with flowers. The people of

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Paris literally choked the narrow streets of Saint-Denis, so eager were they to see the Béarnais. Soon the town rang with their shouts; they were won in a moment by the fine bearing and animated countenance of this heir to an ancient kingdom, who bowed and smiled graciously on all. Their cries of 'Long live the King' made him King of France indeed, in spite of all the Spaniards, Romans, and Lorraines.

'Who are you?' asked the Archbishop of Bourges on the threshold of the church.

'I am the King.'

'What would you?'

'I would be received into the pale of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church.' Then the King knelt down at the door of the church, and said in a loud voice: 'I swear before Almighty God to live and die in the Roman Catholic Apostolic faith, to protect and defend it in the sight of all at the peril of my life, renouncing all heresies that are contrary to the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church.' Subsequently he handed to the Archbishop a copy of these same words written and signed by him. He then entered the church, surrounded by a crowd of prelates, Church dignitaries, and priests, their ranks broken by the people who strove to approach the King and made the vaults re-echo with their shouts and cries. The abjuration was repeated at the foot of the Altar of the Holy Apostles, and confession was held behind the altar. The Bishop of Nantes then celebrated High Mass, and after the *Te Deum* had been sung and largess

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thrown to the crowd, the King returned to his lodging.

After the ceremony he dined in public. The benedicite and the grace were chanted to music. After dinner he listened to a sermon from the Archbishop, and attended vespers, and later mounted his horse, and rode to Montmartre to pray in the church there. The people made a grand display of fireworks at Montmartre, and their example was followed in many of the villages of the valley of Montmorency and its environs.

In the evening he who was never known to put anything off till the next day wrote, with the aid of his secretaries, to all the Parliaments of his kingdom a letter, dated from Saint-Denis in France the 25th of July 1593, signed by Henry and countersigned by Potier, announcing to them 'his sincere conversion.'

From this day onward he never lost an opportunity of publicly performing the acts of a good Catholic.

On the 30th of July a truce was concluded for three months between Henry and the Duc de Mayenne, and subsequently prolonged until the end of the year. On the 31st of July M. de la Clielle, the King's major-domo, left for Rome to announce to d'Ossat, the Bishop of Rennes, the King's abjuration, and the forthcoming embassy of the Duc de Nevers, who was to follow him and seek absolution from the Holy Father.

Paris greeted the news of the King's conversion with great acclamation. In a few hours he became

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as great a favourite with the Parisians as he had until then been an object of hatred. All the women were on his side, and those who had been fortunate enough to see him never wearied of praising his fine appearance and his sincere spirit of devotion. From that day his cause was won. The States, to whom the Parisians had looked for peace in the shape of a Catholic King, had now, in their eyes, no further mission to perform, since at Saint-Denis the lawful heir to the throne had been seen at Mass and blessed by the Prelates. The Spaniards, with their fine pretensions, became objects of ridicule; and the Leaguers a butt for everybody's wit. The Deputies, the Sixteen, and the exalted members of the League, who had given themselves over to Spain and received large subsidies from Philip in return, began to feel that they were being left behind, and sought to arrange terms with him whom they still called King of Navarre, but whom they feared they would soon see King of France.

Such fair progress had his cause made since his conversion that as early as the month of August they endeavoured to treat with him through Gabrielle.

On Saturday the 21st of August, writes L'Estoile, Guarinus, one of the most vehement preachers of his time, 'preaching at Saint-Etienne-des-Groëys, said that the three learned doctors whom the Béarnais had summoned to Saint-Denis to instruct him were his minions; he spoke of the amours of the King and of Gabrielle, whom he also roundly abused. Whereupon the Sixteen, ill content, went to him and to Boucher, who had also been giving vent to

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similar vituperations, and pointed out the error they were committing in speaking in that manner, seeing that they were desirous of making use of her. To this they replied that they cared not what they said, but that they had two definite objects in view in their preaching: the one, to feed the hatred the people felt towards the King of Navarre for his evil living, and the other to remove any suspicion that the people might have that they were hoping to treat with Gabrielle.'

Every day one deputy or another submitted himself to Henry. On the 22nd of December there was one more sitting of the States of the League at the Louvre, and after that time they are heard of no more in history. We must be thankful to them for having refrained from causing all the trouble that they might have caused.

At this time the King's affection for Gabrielle was at its height. At the beginning of the year he still had doubts of her. Then it seems that the anxieties that preyed upon him and the dangers that threatened him suddenly touched her heart. We see her no more the fickle and light-hearted mistress, but a devoted companion, sharing the trials and troubles of the King, and encouraging him with counsel that was inspired by love.

Hidden in the corner of the church of Saint-Denis she witnessed the abjuration, for which she was so largely responsible. As far back as the April of this year the King seems to have entertained thoughts of marrying her, and actually to have

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approached Queen Margaret with a view to obtaining her consent to a divorce.

The year 1594 opened for Henry under very favourable auspices. On the 1st of January he made his entry into Meaux, and recommenced hostilities against Paris. Gabrielle was lodged at the outposts, and from her tent at Montmartre she followed the operations of the siege, which was being carried on with great assiduity on the part of the royalists. Mayenne had replaced the Comte de Belin, Governor of Paris, of whom he had begun to be suspicious, by the Comte de Brissac. The Parisians were already turning royalist, and defection was fast thinning the ranks of the Leaguers in the provinces.

On the 6th of March Mayenne and all his family left Paris never to enter it again; on the 15th Villars promised to make over Rouen to the King. The Comte de Brissac, the Provost Lhuillier, the chief alderman of the town of Langlois, and their numerous friends arranged with Henry to deliver Paris into his hands. During the night of the 21st or 22nd of March they prepared the way for the King, and he effected an entrance by means of the Porte Neuve at five o'clock in the morning. Wherever he was recognised by the people he was hailed with delight. He was escorted to Notre-Dame, where he listened to the singing of the *Te Deum*. The Spanish garrison withdrew on the same day, and the King watched them march past on their way out by the Porte Saint-Denis. Before the day was past all the soldiers of the States and all the townsmen had acknowledged him as King.

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The Bastille surrendered on the 27th, and on the 29th Villars handed Rouen over to the King. On the 30th Parliament issued the following declaration:—

‘The Court revokes and declares null and void all that has been done, ordered and decreed by the so-called deputies of the assembly held in this town of Paris under the name of the States-General of the realm, considering them as no more than the deeds of private individuals, chosen for the most part by the factious spirits of the kingdom, the friends of Spain, having no legal right whatever; and it forbids the aforesaid so-called deputies to assume any authority or meeting in this town or elsewhere, under the penalty of being looked upon as destroyers of the peace and guilty of high treason, and charges those of the aforesaid deputies who are yet at this present in the town of Paris to retire each to his own house, there to take the oath of allegiance before the judge and dwell in obedience to the King.’

Edicts such as these were the outcome of the King’s conversion.

While the royal cause was making rapid progress on all sides, Henry undertook the siege of Laon, and Gabrielle, who was now in an advanced state of pregnancy, wished to be near him. She took up her abode not in the château, but in a house in the centre of the town, and there on the 7th of June 1594 gave birth to a son, Cæsar, the future Duc de Vendôme.

The room where she lay is still to be seen at Concy, and an inscription above the high chimney—

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piece fixes the date, and reminds us of the interesting event.

After the birth of Cæsar fortune seems to have favoured the King still further. Two large convoys of troops carrying provisions to Laon were arrested by the Maréchal de Biron, and on the 21st of July the town capitulated.

Some days before the capitulation, on the 20th of June, one of Gabrielle's brothers, François-Louis, the first Marquis de Cœuvres, who was hardly nineteen, was killed before Laon. By this unhappy occurrence Antoine d'Estrées lost the elder of his two sons, and François-Annibal, the younger, being now sole heir to the name and estate, immediately resigned the bishopric of Noyon, and took the title of his deceased brother.

Poitiers was the next town to surrender to the King. Provence was delivered from the yoke of d'Epernon; Elizabeth and the Dutch sent to the help of Bretagne, which was holding out for the King against the Duc de Mercœur. The Maréchal d'Aumont reduced Concarneau and Quimper. On the 12th of August the King signed a treaty with Balagny, Prince de Cambrai. On the 18th he made an entry into Amiens, and Beauvais, Péronne, Doullens, and Saint-Malo also surrendered. Henry then thought that the moment was come in which to make a solemn entry into his capital. It was his regular habit, after he had become master of any one of the towns of his kingdom, to see to the safety of the inhabitants, regulate the internal administration, and then some time later to enter

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with all the pomp and circumstance of kingship. Thus, although he had been master of Paris for several months, the date of his entry was not fixed until the 15th of September.

On the 13th, which was a Tuesday, he came there with Gabrielle and the Duc de Longueville to superintend the final preparations for the ceremony. 'He slept with Dumortier,' says L'Estoile, 'and on the next day returned alone in his coach with Madame de Liencourt to Saint-Germain-en-Laye.'

On Thursday, the 15th, about seven o'clock in the evening, he entered Paris by torchlight, escorted by a goodly company of nobles, lords, and officers of the Crown, numerous bodies of troops, and a most enthusiastic crowd. Gabrielle, glittering with diamonds, preceded the King in a litter. He wished to show this rare beauty, the mother of Cæsar, to the people. 'It was eight o'clock,' says L'Estoile, 'when His Majesty passed over the bridge of Notre-Dame, accompanied by a magnificent escort. Madame de Liencourt was a little ahead of him, in a magnificent open litter, covered with so many pearls and precious stones that their brilliance made the torches look dim. She wore a robe of black satin.' It seems that from this moment he wished her to take part in his triumph and be associated with him in his royalty.

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III

THE PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE AT AMIENS

HENRY's joy at the birth of his infant son was very great—he seems to have experienced the natural feelings of a father very keenly. The thought of the position in which the child was placed by Gabrielle's marriage soon began to give him grave uneasiness. Legally Cæsar did not belong to them, and if the King chanced to die the child ran great risk of some day bearing the name of Cæsar d'Amerval. The institution of proceedings for setting Gabrielle free from her unfortunate marriage with d'Amerval de Liencourt became a matter of urgent necessity, and a petition for divorce was forthwith lodged with the magistrate at Amiens.

The charge should have been entered at Noyon, where the marriage itself had taken place, and where d'Amerval was domiciled, but the town was in the hands of the Spaniards, and its Courts of Justice were suspended. There was a further reason why Gabrielle should bring her petition before the magistrate at Amiens: her second brother, François-Annibal d'Estrées, had just been nominated Bishop of Noyon by the King, and was awaiting the papal letters patent of his investiture from Rome. Besides the material difficulties attendant on his ecclesiastical jurisdiction at Noyon, he had to fear a challenge on d'Amerval's behalf

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from the magistrate of the town, by reason of the relationship existing between the coming Bishop and Gabrielle, the petitioner. This challenge would have caused a loss of time, and this she wished at all costs to avoid.

Hence on the 27th of August 1594 she addressed the following supplication to his lordship the Bishop of Amiens, or to his magistrate :—‘ Dame Gabrielle d’Estrées, supported by her aunts and sisters and other relations, puts it before you that, as she was only eighteen at the time of her marriage, she must have been unduly compelled by her father and other relations to marry Messire Nicolas d’Amerval, Sieur de Liencourt, with whom she lived for the space of two years or thereabouts, in compliance with the marriage laws.’

Then she adds that her husband was found to be impotent, and that she took her aunts, sisters, and other relations into her confidence, and they advised her ‘to appeal to you, as to an ordinary judge, for means of an escape from so unfortunate a position. . . .’

‘In consideration of which, my lord, may it please you to grant the supplicant authority to summon her husband into your presence, to the end that they may both come before you, that the facts afore-mentioned, and others, may be verified for a separation, and that the aforesaid marriage be declared null and void.

‘(Signed) D’ESTRÉES, ISABEL BABOU and
ANNE DE MARIDOR.’

‘Presented this 27th day of August 1594 by Paul

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Accard, solicitor to the spiritual court, on behalf of the said Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées.

‘(Signed) ACCARD.’

The magistrate made the summons in Latin: ‘That the said d’Amerval be cited to appear before us, the magistrate of Amiens, on a fitting day, to reply in person to the petition.

‘(Signed) FRANÇOIS ROZE.’

The two relations whose signatures are found side by side with Gabrielle’s are Isabelle Babou de la Bourdaisière, Marquise d’Escoubleau de Sourdis her aunt on her mother’s side, of whom we have already heard, and Anne de Maridor, wife of Jean-Antoine de Longueval, Seigneur de Barancourt, Governor of Clermont in Picardy, Gabrielle’s uncle by marriage.

The trial seems to have been suspended during the whole of September, and it was not until the last day of the month that the Abbé Adrien Vérité, Prebendary Canon of the notorious church of Amiens, acting in the absence of the magistrate, François Roze, signed the letters summoning to appear before him on the Thursday following the fête day of Saint Fuscien, the 6th of October, Sieur Nicolas d’Amerval, in order that he might respond in person to the charges brought against him and all things might be ordered in justice and equity. He went on to request and entreat the neighbouring ecclesiastical judges to allow the proceedings to go forward if need be through the territory of their jurisdiction.

Christophe Fillet, the priest to whom the magis-

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trate's order was entrusted, did not find d'Amerval at his residence, and the writ was examined and signed in his absence by Antoine d'Amerval, squire, and Antoine-Louis Maquet, the receiver of Maubisson. D'Amerval failed to appear on the 6th of October, and the judge adjourned proceedings to the 10th. On Tuesday, the 13th of October, d'Amerval had still shown no signs of life. Paul Accard, solicitor to the petitioner, asked that he should be judged by default, and, considering that d'Amerval was actually present at Amiens, requested the judge to issue a new summons against him. On the 8th of December 1594 Christophe Fillet, priest, presented himself at Jumelles, a manor in the diocese of Amiens belonging to d'Amerval, where his mother, Dame Adrienne Cauchon de Maupas, lived all the year round, and there saw d'Amerval, to whom he signified the judgment by default given against him and the new summons, to which he gave answer: 'I will satisfy them and go myself to the place whither I am called or send someone thither in my stead.'

On Thursday, the 15th of December, Gabrielle appeared in person before the magistrate at Amiens. After having been sworn she renewed her petition, constituting Paul Accard her solicitor, and taking up her abode with him.

Immediately after there appeared M. Pierre Roche, one of the solicitors for the spiritual court at Amiens, calling himself acting solicitor for Sieur Nicolas d'Amerval. Paul Accard, Gabrielle's solicitor, maintained that the case was a personal one, and that d'Amerval must appear in person. On

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the next day Paul Accard again presented himself before the magistrate (up to this moment his client's reasons for seeking to cancel her marriage had been those of her father's exercise of compulsion and d'Amerval's impotence), and, in compliance with the petitioner's request, said that Anne Gouffier, Nicolas d'Amerval's first wife, was cousin-german to Sieur d'Estrées, Gabrielle's father, and that the relationship was an obstacle to the marriage of the said Dame Gabrielle with Sieur d'Amerval. On the same day, Friday, the 16th of December, d'Amerval presented himself in person for the first time, and appointed M. Pierre Roche his solicitor. He requested to be informed of the course the proceedings had taken, and elected to take up his abode with Louis de Rély, Seigneur de Framicourt, who resided in the Rue des Jacobins, at Amiens. He reserved the necessary official information. D'Amerval stayed for several days, now at his château at Jumelles with his mother, and now at Amiens with his friend the Sieur de Framicourt. He was a prey to very serious embarrassment, torn between feelings of shame at having publicly to confess his impotence, and of fear at the thought of in any way opposing the wishes of the King. This fear was, moreover, being much increased by the news that the King had left Saint-Germain on the 1st of December in company with Gabrielle, the opposing party, and was coming with her to Amiens. Every day the fears of the unfortunate man increased. On the 12th Henry arrived. Outwardly he came to treat concerning the conditions for the proposed capitula-

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tion of the town of Noyon, the articles of which were drawn up and signed at Amiens on the 14th of December, but in reality the proceedings entered upon by Gabrielle must have occupied a great deal of his time and attention. It was then that d'Amerval appears to have made up his mind to obey the oft-repeated summons and appear before the magistrate, and then that, mentally ill balanced as he was, he resolved to lodge his protest against an annulment which he could do nothing to prevent and an avowal torn from him by the truth.

On the 12th of December, while the King was entering Amiens, d'Amerval shut himself up, and made the following deposition:—‘I, Nicolas d'Amerval, Seigneur de Liencourt and of other places, being in my right mind and recognising that there is nothing more certain than death and more uncertain than the present hour, hereby make my last will and testament, as follows below; the which testament is written in my own hand; I require and intend it to take effect, and to that end I have made certain declarations to the truth of which I swear.

‘In the first place I give my soul to God, my Creator, and commend it to the prayers and intercessions of the Virgin Mary and of all the Saints in Paradise, and I wish my body, when severed from the soul, solemnly to be laid in the Church of Liencourt. My funeral obsequies I leave to the discretion of M. d'Orvilliers, my cousin, whom I nominate executor of this my will.

‘I give and bequeath to Charlotte and Marie d'Amerval, my two daughters, the whole of my

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real and personal estate, acquired conjointly with my wife, and I desire that there shall be included therein all that has been acquired by Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées, my wife, since we have been joined together in marriage.

'And because that, to obey the King and in fear of my life, I am about to consent to the dissolution of my marriage with the said d'Estrées, in accordance with the petition lodged with the magistrate at Amiens, I declare and protest before God and man, I swear and affirm that, if the dissolution be ordered and brought to pass, it will be done by force, against my will, and only out of respect for the King, seeing that the assertion, confession and declaration that I am impotent and incapable is untrue. In witness whereof I have signed this my testament and this declaration, which I have written by my own hand, and which I intend, hereafter, to be used by myself and by my children to nullify what shall have been done and ordered by the said magistrate to my harm, which testament and declaration I have wished to be kept secret, and, to this end, have folded and closed the sheet of paper on which it is written and sealed it with my seal, on which are imprinted my arms; and I have had it, thus sealed and closed, laid before two royal notaries of the said town of Amiens and have declared that the contents of this sheet of paper are my will and the declaration made by me and signed by my hand at Amiens, this 12th day of December 1594.

'(Signed) NICOLAS D'AMERVAL.'

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On the back is inscribed the following:—‘Attestation of the Notaries.—On this 17th day of December, in the afternoon, there appeared before us, Louis de Louvencourt and Pierre Touache, royal notaries in the town and bailiwick of Amiens, Messire Nicolas d’Amerval, Knight, Sieur de Liencourt, having his residence at the said Liencourt, and being at present lodged in this town of Amiens with the said Framicourt, in the Rue des Jacobins, who put before us, the under-mentioned notaries, the present paper, folded, closed, and sealed, in which was his testament, written and signed by his own hand, and containing also certain declarations which he wished to be kept secret, desiring us to notify the same at the back of the said paper. And this declaration the said Sieur de Liencourt signed again in the presence of the said notaries on the said day of the said year. Thus:—Nicolas d’Amerval, de Louvencourt and Touache. On either side is a waxen seal on which is imprinted three rings, and a ribbon of white silk connects the seals.’

We notice in this document that d’Amerval says, to obey the King, and in fear of his life, he is about to consent to the dissolution of his marriage, and he swears before God and man, and swears and affirms that if the dissolution be ordered and brought to pass it will be done by force, against his will, and only out of respect for the King, since the assertion that he is impotent is not true. It would be impossible to protest in a more energetic manner against the dissolution of his marriage, and yet a few days later we see him in the course of

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the proceedings consenting to it again and again. Nor would it be possible to protest more forcibly against the charge of impotence, and this protest he repeats on several occasions, both before the magistrate and before the doctors who were sent to visit him.

Is it likely that he would have committed such an act of weakness for fear the King might make an attempt on his life? We are surprised to find it asserted in several places in d'Aubigné's *Memoirs* that Henry bore him a grudge, and endeavoured to bring about his assassination. This anxiety on the part of d'Aubigné was quite unwarranted, but it is easily understood in a man of his lofty mind, living at a time not very far removed from the period of murders and assassinations, of which Saint Bartholomew is but a single and terrible example. But the fears that haunted d'Aubigné were entirely without foundation, for Henry, although possessed of many faults, was certainly the most humane of princes. Equally unfounded was the fear that filled d'Amerval; and, however keenly Henry may have longed to see Gabrielle delivered from the legal bonds that bound her to her husband, it was d'Amerval's own pusillanimity that made him think of a danger that never existed.

On the same day that d'Amerval deposited his will with the two notaries—that is, on Saturday, the 17th of December—he appeared before the magistrate.

Accard, in the presence of d'Amerval, said that Gabrielle had obtained judgment by default on the

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6th of October against her husband; that she had again summoned him for the 10th; that he had not appeared by the 13th, and on that day she again obtained a second judgment by default against him; and that then at length d'Amerval appeared, in company with M. Pierre Roche. D'Amerval then spoke. He declared that his chief domicile was in the diocese of Noyon, but that he sometimes resided at his estate at Jumelles, situated in the diocese of Amiens, and four miles from that town, where his mother resided also; that he accepted the jurisdiction of the magistracy of Amiens, because the town of Noyon was in the hands of the enemy, and also because the brother of the petitioner had been nominated Bishop and Count of Noyon by the King. In consequence he requested the revocation of the judgments declared against him, and declared himself ready to reply to the demands and assertions of Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées. Paul Accard replied in the name of the latter, and maintained that the judgments had been obtained in justice and equity, and that they had been duly notified to him; that if the said Gabrielle d'Estrées laid the proceedings before the magistrate at Amiens it was, in the first place, because the magistrate of Noyon was not sitting, the town being in the hands of the enemy; further, because her brother had just been nominated to the bishopric of Noyon; and finally, because he was the judge nearest to hand for both parties. For all these reasons, to which that of d'Amerval's formal consent had just been added, Accard maintained that the case ought to be examined, and

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he offered to make known the reasons for the dissolution of the marriage. D'Amerval, assisted by his solicitor, again declared his willingness to recognise the magistrate at Amiens as his judge and to reply to the pleas of the petitioner. An official report of the proceedings was drawn up, and signed by both parties. Thereupon the judge called upon the petitioner to state the grounds on which she based the dissolution of her marriage, and added that d'Amerval must be prepared immediately to reply to them. Accard cited his impotence and the relationship of Anne Gouffier to the petitioner, and on the same day, the 17th of December, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Pierre Roche furnished in writing d'Amerval's replies to the alleged reasons for divorce.

We will now place the husband's replies against each one of the six points brought forward in the name of the petitioner.

(1) Gabrielle maintained that she had married the said Sieur d'Amerval about two years before, being unduly constrained thereto by her father and other relations, who had greatly importuned her. She had never frequented his society nor borne him any friendship in consequence of a report having come to her ears concerning his health and indisposition. Through his solicitor, Roche, d'Amerval replied in writing to this first clause 'that he had no knowledge of that which was contained therein.'

(2) 'To prove that the report concerning his indisposition was true' she maintained 'that never

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from the day of their marriage had she known the said d'Amerval intimately.'

To this second clause d'Amerval said 'that that which was contained therein had not come to his knowledge.'

(3) 'From the time they were married they had not known each other intimately, although they had lived together for some time.'

To this d'Amerval 'confessed that that was true.' He was then asked why he had denied the second clause.

(4) 'That, since her marriage, it had come to the knowledge of the petitioner that the said d'Amerval had had some secret malady since the decease of the late Madame Anne Gouffier, his first wife, and that this was the reason of his impotence.' To this clause he 'confessed that that also which was contained therein was true.'

(5) 'And, in addition, that the deceased wife of the said Sieur de Liencourt was cousin-german to Sieur d'Estrées, father of the petitioner, of which fact the relations of the two parties took neither heed nor thought, but which was well known to the said Sieur d'Amerval, his mother and others of his relations, and was a reason sufficient in itself for declaring the said marriage null and void and contracted against the holy laws and canons of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church.' To this d'Amerval 'said also that he agreed with the contents of the said clause.'

(6) 'That all the above statements were true, as the said Sieur d'Amerval knew full well, and that he

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had acknowledged and confessed them to several people and affirmed them to be true to the said Dame d'Estrées.'

To this 'he said that, in respect of the sixth clause, he equally agreed with its contents and confessed them to be true.'

These two separate documents, which we have intercalated, are both dated the 17th of December 1594. Still, on the same day the magistrate, in the presence of the clerk of the court, proceeded with the interrogation of Messire d'Amerval, who made the following replies:—'That he was twenty-eight years of age, and lived at Liencourt principally, sometimes at Jumelles; that he had no knowledge whatever concerning any violence used by the father of the said lady to compel her to marry; that he acknowledged that she had never borne him any friendship, but that he did not know whether the said lady had been told that he suffered from a certain indisposition of the body. He added that they had been married two years and three months. He had not known the said lady intimately, because, during his widowhood, a fall from his horse had rendered him impotent. He asserted that he had had children by his first wife, since whose death the fall had occurred. He had consulted two doctors, whose names he would not divulge, who were, moreover, no longer living. Finally, he acknowledged that Madame Anne Gouffier, daughter of the Seigneur de Crèvecœur, was cousin-german to Sieur d'Estrées, father of Dame Gabrielle, and that he had omitted to ask for a dispensation to

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enable him to marry the latter, although his friend the magistrate of Beauvais had advised him to take such a step; and he added that by his first wife he had had four children, of whom two were still living.' (These are the two daughters mentioned in his will.)

The judge in terminating his interrogation asked if he had had any collusion with the said lady. He replied that he had not; that he had not spoken to her, nor she to him nor to anyone. Asked whether anyone had urged and incited him to seek to bring about the dissolution of the said marriage, he replied in the negative.

The magistrate, whose zeal was evidently stimulated by the presence of the King at Amiens, then proceeded at the same sitting to the interrogation of Gabrielle. In her reply she said that she was about twenty-one years of age, and was at present residing in the town of Amiens, and that she had been married two years and three months to the *Sieur de Liencourt*; that before her marriage with him she had not known him nor been in any way friendly with him, and that she had only married him under compulsion, to meet the wishes of her father and other relations.

The judge then asked her what constraint had been put upon her; she replied 'that it had been an absolute command and she had been obliged to marry under pain of disobedience, although she had shown no willingness whatever and had several times declared that it was not her wish to marry the *Sieur de Liencourt*. She said that she had not

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known him intimately during the three months they had lived together. She further acknowledged that she had, not long ago, spoken to Madame de Sourdis and some of her cousins concerning her husband's impotence, and added that she persisted in her request and was of the opinion that the *Sieur de Liencourt* should have confessed to her father the disability consequent on his fall from a horse. She said that she had had no strife or quarrel with her husband, but that, as long as they were together, they had lived in amity, and she only wished that circumstances had been different, especially as she had not loved him before; and added that she had not known before marriage of her relationship with Madame Anne Gouffier. Asked if she had had any collusion with her husband, she replied that she had not. She was then reminded of the sanctity of the marriage sacrament, as instituted in the Church, which could never be broken or dissolved by man, but remained for ever inviolate, and she was exhorted to tell the truth whatever happened. She replied that she had told the truth and did not consider that she had contracted a marriage with the said *Sieur de Liencourt* for the reasons cited above, but that, had the said marriage been a true one in the eyes of the Church, she would not have sought to be freed therefrom.'

We will now anticipate the course of events, so that we may analyse a second interrogation which Gabrielle underwent on the 22nd of December.

In virtue of his office the magistrate appointed a hearing, and asked her 'whether, having regard to

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the weakness and impotence of the *Sieur de Liencourt*, her husband, she would not consent to live with him as with a brother; she replied that she would not. Whether she did not know of his impotence before she married him; she replied that she had known nothing about it. And again whether at any time since the day of her marriage she had consented to lie with him; she replied again that she had not, and that what she had said before on this point bore out that she had never given her consent to the marriage, for she never wished for it, but was constrained thereto by her father's orders. Whether she knew if the banns had been called in accordance with the custom of the Church; she replied that she did not know. Whether she had not said, before the celebration of the said marriage, to several of her relations, that she would never of her own free will consent to the marriage, but only in obedience to her father's wishes; she replied that she had, and had complained to many of having been forced into the marriage. And finally questioned as to what church she was married in and the name of the priest who had administered the holy sacrament; she replied that the marriage had taken place at *Noyon*, in a chapel of the great church, but the name of the priest was unknown to her.'

We have set the two interrogations to which *Gabrielle* was submitted, at an interval of five days, side by side in this manner because the one completes the other. We will now go back to the point at which we left the proceedings.

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On Saturday, the 17th of December, after having heard *Sieur d'Amerval* and *Gabrielle d'Estrées* in succession, the magistrate proceeded to bring them face to face. Both held to their former replies. The judge then ordered *Gabrielle* to produce the genealogy that was alleged as a bar to the marriage on the grounds of propinquity of relationship. Thus terminated that day, in which, it must be remembered, the events proceeded very much more quickly in consequence of *Henry's* presence at *Amiens*.

One matter seems to have troubled the mind of the magistrate very much, and that was whether he were competent to try the case. The magistrate at *Noyon* had never been apprised of the affair; the two parties were agreed on judgment being given at *Amiens*, and had declared their willingness on several occasions; and yet in spite of this *François Roze* asked his colleague at *Noyon* whether he would give him the power to pronounce judgment on the case.

On Monday, the 19th, in the presence of *Sieur Accard*, the notary and clerk of the court informed *Sieur d'Amerval*, so that he might not later plead ignorance thereof, of the letters, in authentic form, of the magistrate of *Noyon*, dated from *Peronne* and signed and sealed, in which permission was delegated to the magistrate at *Amiens* to give hearing to the case pending between *Gabrielle d'Estrées* and her husband. The *Sieur de Liencourt*, in the presence of *Pierre Roche*, his solicitor, agreed to the granting of this permission. He added that, having received a copy of the genealogy produced by the

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petitioner, he acknowledged it to be a true one and not to be gainsaid. Pierre Roche, speaking on behalf of the said *Sieur d'Amerval*, said 'that he had no means of preventing the dissolution of the marriage, as the said gentleman had in his own person acknowledged.'

The witnesses were then called. First *Messire Antoine de Halwin*, Knight, *Seigneur d'Esclenberg*, *Wailly*, etc., *Bailiff of Amiens*, residing at the said town of *Wailly*, fifty-five years of age, was at the request of *Gabrielle d'Estrées* called upon clearly to explain the relationship of the latter to *Anne Gouffier*. He was the more fitted to instruct the magistrate, said he, 'in that he had himself married *Dame Claude Gouffier*, sister to the said *Anne Gouffier*, deceased.' Next came *Messire Thimoléon Gouffier*, Knight, *Sieur de Thoïs*, upwards of thirty-seven years of age, brother of the said *Anne Gouffier*, and residing at *Crèvecœur*, who made a declaration similar to that of his brother-in-law.

Later the magistrate heard *Jacques Damel*, *Sieur de la Chalotière*, fifty years of age, residing at *Crèvecœur*, who said that he had been in the service of the said *Sieur* and *Dame de Crèvecœur*, father and mother of *Dame Anne Gouffier*. His position, it may be observed, had nothing in common with the position of those 'in service' at the present day. It was that of a gentleman attached to the person of a great lord, dwelling in his house, following him in war, and assisting him in his performance of high functions. The *Sieur de la Chalotière* confirmed the previous statements.

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A fourth witness was heard, who also confirmed what had been said by the other witnesses.

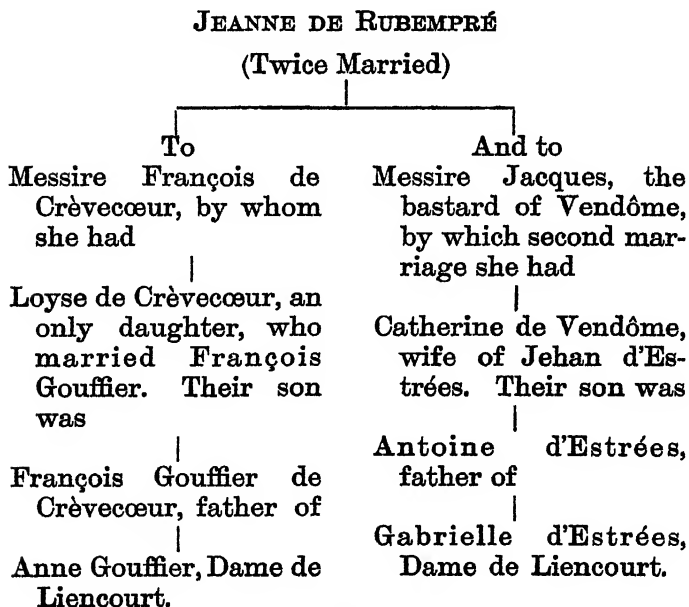
The petitioner had called two other witnesses for the 19th of December, but they failed to put in an appearance. They were again summoned for Thursday, the 22nd of December, and their evidence was heard on that day. First to be called was Jehan Grisel, *Sieur du Fay*, ensign in one of the companies of the regiment of Picardy, residing at Bouquimiles, twenty years of age. 'Asked if he had heard that the said Dame Gabrielle had been constrained by M. d'Estrées, her father, or by others, to marry the said *Sieur d'Amerval*, he replied that he had been educated as a page in the house of the said *Sieur d'Estrées* and was still there at the time of the marriage, which had not been contracted with the free consent of the said lady, because she had, some time before, spoken to him to this effect: "Ah, well, they wish me to marry him [speaking of *d'Amerval*] and to put me out of the way; I will do it, but it will be against my will." He also declared that they had little satisfaction from the marriage; in fact, from the time that they first broached the subject, she did nothing but weep and lament.'

The magistrate then heard Maître Hugues Nicolardot, steward to M. d'Estrées, and secretary to the King's chamber, twenty-nine years of age. From his deposition we gather that among other duties he had charge of the correspondence of *Sieur d'Estrées*. He knew that the late M. de Crèvecœur and the said *Sieur d'Estrées* were related—'for one

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thing, inasmuch as he had heard them say so, and for another, in that he had on several occasions written to the said Sieur de Crèvecœur in the name of the said Sieur d'Estrées, who, in signing the letters, always put: "Your cousin," in the same way that the said Sieur de Crèvecœur signed the letters he sent to him, as he could show from letters which were in his possession.'

The relationship thus firmly established, alike by the genealogical tree and the evidence of the witnesses, was as follows:—



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Anne Gouffier and Gabrielle d'Estrées were thus the children of two cousins-german. By the canons of the Church a widower was forbidden to marry a relation of his first wife, whether sister, niece, or cousin. Marriage with such, contracted without the permission of the Church, was looked upon as no marriage at all.

The report contains further a clause added in the name of Sieur d'Amerval: 'If by your sentence,' said Pierre Roche, his solicitor, addressing the judge, 'the said marriage be declared null and void, may it please you to compel the petitioner to render and restore to the said defendant all jewels and precious gems and other gifts bestowed upon her as earnest of the said marriage.'

Paul Accard, solicitor to the petitioner, replied to this clause, and requested 'that the said Sieur d'Amerval be compelled to render and restore all the furniture, jewels, and precious gems that might be in his possession, belonging to the said petitioner, and also any that she may have given him at the time of her marriage.'

On the 21st of December Jehan Juvenis, a doctor of medicine, and Leboeuf, a doctor of surgery, both laying claim to the title of Doctors to the King, proceeded to d'Amerval on a mission entrusted to them by the judge. D'Amerval gave them very full details of his fall and the impotence resulting therefrom. He also gave them his word that he had respected his wife's person. The doctors then gave a very learned disquisition on the consequences of his fall, and were agreed as to his impotence. On

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the next day, Friday, the 23rd, the magistrate summoned the counsel to appear to deliberate on the judgment he was about to pronounce, and once more *Sieur d'Amerval* was called upon. The latter repeated that he gave his willing consent to be judged by the magistrate at Amiens, and added that he did not know at the time of the celebration of his marriage that the tie of relationship was a hindrance thereto in the eyes of the law, and therefore had not troubled to obtain dispensation from the Holy See.

At length we come to the decision of the court, but before analysing it we would call attention to a strange omission in the proceedings. It was a question of the dissolution of a marriage, and yet the party presenting the petition failed to produce what was most important of all, the deed on which the judge was to pronounce judgment, the certificate of this marriage. It was never even demanded, and it was quite as an afterthought that, two days before drawing up the sentence, the magistrate in a complementary interrogation asked *Gabrielle* whether her banns had been published in conformity with the injunctions laid down by the Church, or whether she had obtained dispensation relative to the publication of the said banns. He then asked her where she was married and the name of the priest who officiated. And yet the production of the marriage certificate was indispensable, for if, in contradiction of the statements made by both parties, dispensation had been granted with reference to the relationship existing between

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Gabrielle and Anne Gouffier, it would have been mentioned in the certificate, and one of the reasons put forward by Gabrielle for the dissolution of her marriage would have completely fallen to the ground.

The same certificate would also have contained the necessary information with respect to the publication of the banns. In a word, it was the certificate that Gabrielle wished to cancel, and yet the judge never asked for it to be produced!

IV

THE MAGISTRATE'S SENTENCE

THE sentence was signed on the 24th of December, and deposited in the office of the court. It was not read to the solicitors of the two parties until the 7th day of the following January, which accounts for the fact that authors are so seldom agreed as to the date of the sentence, some giving the one and some the other month.

It can easily be understood that the exact terms of the sentence were not known by those living at the time. The trial had made a great stir, and when some months later the judge declared the marriage dissolved no one asked on what grounds he had framed his sentence. The reason was generally understood to be the impotence of the husband, which had been alleged by the petitioner at the beginning of her suit. The people had at this time no other means of learning the decisions

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of the judges other than by such recitals of them as were given orally.

The news spread far and wide that d'Amerval had been pronounced impotent by the magistrate; and all made merry over the unfortunate husband, who had had, as some said, eight, and as others fourteen, children by a former marriage, and was now declared to be impotent by an ecclesiastical judge, who wished to court favour with the King and the King's mistress.

Later, in the next century, in a suit of which we shall shortly speak, pleaded before the Parliament of Paris with reference to the inheritance left by Gabrielle d'Estrées, the sentence of the magistrate was questioned, and not only was it never for one moment doubted that d'Amerval's infirmity was the motive upon which the marriage was annulled, but the celebrated lawyer Pucelle maintained that the proceedings throughout had been judicial, and saw fit to bring forward new arguments further to establish the allegation of impotence.

Thus was the legend started. All the world had it that the marriage had been annulled for reasons of impotence, and no one believed in the regularity of a sentence which was based on a false allegation of Gabrielle's and an obliging avowal on the part of her husband, corroborated by a lying certificate from the two doctors. Even in our own day M. Berger de Xivrey, in the work which we have already mentioned, has repeated the tale, and has seen fit to pity the lot of d'Amerval, a man who played the ugly part of *mari complaisant* on the

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plea of his having fourteen children to feed! And yet he must have had the sentence in his hands, for he quotes part of certain passages from it, but he does not appear to have read the whole. He calls special attention to the 'long preamble' with which the judge begins the sentence. Now, there is no such thing in the text. It was not the practice in our ancient law to set forth the grounds of a decision in a preamble. The magistrate at Amiens made an examination of the records of the proceedings, and then, without further discussion, and without alleging his reasons, pronounced judgment. Who has not read the decrees of our ancient Parliament, rendered in a few words, sometimes even in a single sentence? The custom, it is true, was not conducive to the carriage of justice; the court, pronouncing the names of the lawyers, would say: 'Such and such an one is non-suited,' and that was all. Why he was non-suited no one knew. Nor if he won his suit was one any the wiser. The statute of the 24th of August 1790 put an end to this abuse, and to-day all judgments give the grounds of the decision in a preamble in which the rights are discussed. The sentence pronounced at Amiens contains no such preamble, and that which M. Berger de Xivrey has taken for such is nothing but a simple record of the proceedings.

It is in vain that we read and reread this document, and in spite of what was said and even pleaded before Parliament, in spite of what has been written on the subject in our own day, we

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are not able to find in the decision any statement whatsoever on the subject of d'Amerval's impotence. François Roze was an extremely astute magistrate, and his method of dealing with this affair serves to prove it; but he did not reap the benefit of his careful precaution, for his sentence has been misjudged and attacked by all the world. His position was a delicate one. He had to try the King's favourite, and, although he might feel disposed towards leniency, he had to avoid any appearance of it; while at the same time it was necessary, in order that the services rendered to the King might be complete, that his decision should be not only favourable, but unimpeachable. For this reason he took great care to establish himself on perfectly solid ground.

What happened as a result of d'Amerval's behaviour towards the magistrate at Noyon has not been fully understood until to-day. Our report of the proceedings supplies us with the truth. As we have seen, Gabrielle never summoned her husband to appear before that magistrate, and in consequence d'Amerval had no occasion to challenge him. At the time of the trial Noyon was in the hands of the Spaniards, and the course of justice was interrupted. Therefore Gabrielle addressed herself to the magistrate at Amiens, as being nearest at hand for her purpose; but the latter, wishing that all should be done in perfect order and regularity, consented to be chosen neither by Gabrielle, who had attached him to her cause, nor by d'Amerval, who declared that no one else should judge him. The magistrate, François Roze, persisted in demanding a commission

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duly drawn up, both from the magistrate at Noyon and from the dean and canons of the chapter administering the vacant see, and not until the latter had expressed their approval of the opening of the proceedings, and delegated him to be the judge, did he feel competent to act.

The next thing he had to consider was the delivery of a judicial sentence. The first reason brought forward by Gabrielle—that of the constraint exercised by her father—did not appear to be sufficiently established. When the magistrate questioned her as to the nature of the constraint employed against her she replied ‘that her father had definitely commanded her to do as he wished, and as she had acted under pain of disobeying him, it would seem that she had been coerced. . . .’

One witness, the *Sieur du Fay*, was heard on this head. He only spoke of Gabrielle’s protests against her father’s wish that she should marry, and of her tears, but not a word of any act of coercion on the father’s part. The judge could not admit this as a sufficient plea. ‘How,’ he asked, ‘could the Church annul a marriage for the sole reason that a daughter had acted in obedience to her father’s wishes, in a case in which neither threats nor violence had been used, nor any constraint, either moral or material?’

The second plea, that of d’Amerval’s impotence, was another difficulty. However well the certificate of doctor or surgeon seemed to have established his infirmity, and notwithstanding the full confession made again and again by d’Amerval, the

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magistrate feared that public spite would never acknowledge this as the true reason ; perhaps he himself had doubts, and suspected that the two parties had come to an agreement on the subject beforehand. He would thus have felt greatly embarrassed had not Gabrielle in the course of the proceedings produced a third plea, which saved the situation.

At a most opportune moment it was realised that Anne Gouffier, d'Amerval's first wife, was second cousin to Gabrielle d'Estrées, his second wife, and that he had not asked for any dispensation before marrying her. From that time it became easy to see the lines upon which the magistrate must proceed. All his efforts were directed towards proving this relationship. He heard six witnesses in all, and five of them were questioned on this point alone. He commanded the petitioner to show him a genealogical tree carefully written out, and as soon as the plea was firmly established the proceedings were practically at an end.

Had the law of 1790 existed in the year 1594 the magistrate would have been compelled to give his reasons for rejecting or admitting the grounds on which either party based his request, but a judge of 1594 was not required to give any such reasons ; he had only to enunciate the pleas brought forward by the petitioner and d'Amerval's confession of the relationship that had existed between his two wives. In his sentence he definitely rejected the first two pleas brought forward by Gabrielle, and spoke only of the third, which he adopted.

In the light of his behaviour it is hence hardly

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possible to consider the magistrate at Amiens as having leanings towards Gabrielle's cause. His sentence was not based on decisions more or less disputable. He based the dissolution of the marriage only on an undeniable fact, and one which was recognised by all the world—namely, that of propinquity of relationship. It has been thought that an ecclesiastical judge lent himself to an immoral action. The events we speak of took place three centuries ago, and we are not here concerned with establishing the integrity of François Roze. It is our opinion that he was a just man; he was certainly a very clever judge.

What is of special interest to us in this affair is that we can unhesitatingly assert that it is not possible to formulate any serious accusation against Henry for having abused his power in helping Gabrielle to win her suit. Never was sentence given that was more in order, more unimpeachable, than this. D'Amerval too, although he had at first declared through the medium of his solicitor that he would lodge an appeal, not only took care not to carry out his threat, but even showed that he cheerfully accepted the decision by the most striking act that a man could perform in the circumstances—that is, by himself marrying again.

This third marriage would not have been possible if the sentence had been other than we have shown it to be and had established d'Amerval's impotence. It was, in fact, necessary, before he could marry Mademoiselle d'Autun, that he should show that his former marriage was dissolved, and to do

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this he was obliged to produce the magistrate's sentence.

The only document which seeks to incriminate Henry is d'Amerval's will, which we have reproduced. D'Amerval deposited with two notaries at Amiens a testament, in which he declares that 'out of respect for the King . . . , in obedience to the King . . . , for fear of his life' is he about to confess his impotence; while in the same testament he swears before God and man that he was in good health, and quite capable of begetting children.

What must we think of this poor man, who on the 12th of December 1594 signed this declaration and deposited it on the 17th of the same month with the notaries, and who on the same day made a full confession of his infirmity before the magistrate; who, again, on the 21st repeated his confession, under oath, before the two doctors, and entered into the fullest details in so doing?

Is the truth to be found in his testament or in his replies to the magistrate? We have no hesitation in saying that it is to be found in the latter;—that d'Amerval was really impotent, and that Gabrielle spoke truly when she said that her father had forced her to marry him.

V

THE LAWSUIT OF 1651

THE case had long been judged, and Gabrielle and Henry were both dead, when in 1651, in the Parlia-

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ment of Paris, a debate was held on a scandalous lawsuit, of which the report spread far and wide. The Duchesse d'Elbœuf, daughter of Gabrielle d'Estrées and Henry IV., demanded from her eldest brother, Cæsar, Duc de Vendôme, restitution of his share of the property inherited from their mother. She maintained that he had been born to Henry IV. before the dissolution of their mother's marriage with d'Amerval de Liencourt, and that in consequence, as the fruit of their adultery, he was incapable of inheriting, inasmuch as the sentence of the magistrate at Amiens could have no retro-active effect. She asserted further that she herself, born after the dissolution of the marriage, alone had the right to name herself her mother's heir. This unfortunate marriage of Gabrielle's was still, after fifty-seven years, to sow strife and discord among her descendants.

Cæsar and his eldest son, the Duc de Mercœur, had made their peace with Mazarin and the Queen. Cæsar had been admiral for a year, and a few months later the Duc de Mercœur was to marry the eldest of the Cardinal's nieces. The Duc d'Elbœuf and his wife remained steadfast to the 'Fronde.' Almost ruined, they were in hopes, under pressure of circumstances, of wringing from Parliament an unjust sentence against their political opponents.

Their cause was solemnly pleaded before the Grande Chambre on the 13th of June by Bataille for the Duke and Duchess of Elbœuf, and by Pucelle, a celebrated lawyer of his time, for the Duc de Vendôme. The pleading has been preserved. Bataille

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spoke in measured terms, and very justly, against an improper system; while the arguments used by Pucelle were no less remarkable. With perfect justice did he stigmatise the daughter of Henry IV., who in 1628 had played the part of one of Richelieu's spies in the dungeon of Vincennes, in order to ruin her brother Cæsar, whom the Cardinal strove to convict of high treason, and now, twenty years later, sought by a scandalous suit to sully the memory of Henry the Great and of her mother, and to prove that this very brother whom she had endeavoured to deliver into the hands of Richelieu was born in adultery.

Bataille had in the course of his pleading made allusion to a calumny which was spread about at the time of Cæsar's birth, that his father was the Duc de Bellegarde. Pucelle maintained that Cæsar was undoubtedly the son of Henry IV., and the best proof thereof was 'that he acknowledged him for his son,'

“ . . . *Prolemque fatetur*
Jupiter esse suam . . . ”—

words which ought to stop the mouth of calumny and are in themselves a sufficient reply to the scandalous tales of the last century, those infamous concoctions written by the hand of the enemy, with a pen steeped in gall, slanders and libels that have even been visited, in later days, upon men far more illustrious than my client here.'

The Duc de Vendôme's lawyer then devoted his attention to the magistrate's sentence, and, falling into the common error, proceeded to speak of

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d'Amerval's impotence. 'An obvious and certain impotence,' said he, 'met with in the person of the late *Sieur de Liencourt*, which came upon him after his first marriage, as the result of an extraordinary accident, justified and authenticated by irrevocable proof. . . .' He then went on to lay bare the fact that the marriage had been declared null and void, that no appeal had been made against the sentence, and that it had been so far accepted by the *Sieur de Liencourt* that, seeing himself free and master of his own person, he had contracted a third marriage with *Demoiselle Marguerite d'Autun*, if indeed we can give this honourable title to a wretched union which only served to discover the way in which he abused the sacrament.

'Shortly after,' said the lawyer, 'd'Amerval was summoned before the magistrate of Paris by his third wife, who in her turn alleged his impotence in order to obtain a dissolution of her marriage, and on the 29th of February, 1600, her petition was granted.'

Omer Talon, the Advocate-General, was the Public Prosecutor in the case, and it was he who now rose to speak. He expressed himself with an impartiality not without merit at this time. 'Thus did King Henry the Great, in the prime of his life and in the midst of his victories, love the *Duchesse de Beaufort*, and by her have three natural children; we need not strive to excuse their guilt, for they have by now rendered an account before a higher tribunal.' Then he explained at great length the doctrine of the ancient right of kings:

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natural children could be made legitimate by royal letters, and they could in that way be rendered capable of accepting trusts, holding offices, receiving donations, and the like; but the Prince, for all his power, could not make them heir to their parents, nor render them capable of succeeding '*ab intestat*.' Neither of the parties present could inherit from Madame la Duchesse de Beaufort. They had received many favours and liberal gifts at the hands of the King. In 1619 there was drawn up between them a deed of division, improperly so called, for only among co-heirs can there be division.

Without pressing the analysis too far we may see with what rigorous dialectic the Advocate-General came to show that, where there was no division, there could be no reclamation nor any going back on a deed that could never have existed.

He then proceeded to examine the results of the sentence of the magistrate at Amiens, and said: 'That if the agreement of those who would marry is not legal or if they are not in fit state and have not the power to contract a marriage (as, for example, a man already married, a priest or a monk) the sacrament is non-existent, and there rests no obligation between them. Thus a man who is impotent, since he may be compared to a child not yet arrived at the age of puberty, is not capable of contracting a marriage . . . and in consequence the declaration conveyed in the sentence of a magistrate before whom impotence has been proved is not that the marriage is null but that it has never been legally contracted at all, and to go back to

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fundamental principles, in such a sentence the impotent man is declared to be a deceiver, and one who has never received the grace and mercy of the sacrament.'

The result was that the marriage of Gabrielle d'Estrées was shown never to have existed, that Cæsar and the Duchesse d'Elbœuf, one born during her marriage and the other after its dissolution, were both in the same case, and the Duchess was in no way justified in questioning the birth of her brother. The conclusions here drawn by the Advocate-General are based on an error in point of fact that the Amiens sentence rests on d'Amerval's impotence. But, fortunately, this error had no influence whatever on the well-founded reasoning of the public prosecutor. The dissolution of a marriage in which the contracting parties were too closely related had the same effect as that of a marriage contracted with a man who was impotent; the marriage was *ab initio nullum*, and hence Omer Talon's conclusions still held good.

Parliament immediately issued a writ in conformity with these conclusions: 'The court has declared and declares inadmissible the demands made by the clients of Bataille and contained in their petition presented on the 29th of April, and again on the 20th of May, and in the letters obtained by them on the 7th of June.

(Signed) GUYSET,

'This 13th day of June 1651.'

In spite of a most active search we have not been fortunate enough to discover the report of the pro-

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ceedings taken by the third Dame d'Amerval de Liencourt against her husband before the Paris magistracy. But we are able to gather a few details from a memoir published before the hearing in the name of Cæsar de Vendôme, from the pleading of M. Pucelle, and from the sentence quoted by this lawyer in conclusion of his speech.

After the trial at Amiens, d'Amerval, aided by public opinion, seems to have succeeded in making the world believe that the charge of impotence brought against him by Gabrielle d'Estrées was false. After the decision of the Paris magistrate, in which d'Amerval's impotence was given as a fact, a decision against which d'Amerval did not appeal, there could no longer be any doubt about it. It is certain that he really was impotent. The Paris magistrate, moreover, showed but little sympathy towards this man with his mania for virility, and not only did he unhesitatingly annul his third marriage, which d'Amerval had been foolish enough to conclude, but even forbade him to enter upon another union; at the same time he authorised Marguerite d'Autun to marry again. Freed from her wretched husband, she married the Duc de Bouillon, by whom she had one daughter, Louise de la Marck, who married the Marquis de la Boulaye. The latter acted for the 'Fronde' as Mazarin's agent. Marguerite d'Autun, who in certain documents had been erroneously styled d'Autun de Poyanne, died at Avignon in 1616, and the Duc de Bouillon survived her for many years.

The conclusions to be drawn from this recital

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are, it seems to us, all in favour of Henry IV., and in showing this we are satisfied that we have attained our end.

Not only do we think that the King had no hand in Gabrielle's marriage, but that it was done in opposition to his wishes, and that it is immaterial whether he was already Gabrielle's lover or only became her lover later. We also believe that he can in no way be reproached for his behaviour with regard to the proceedings entered upon for the dissolution of this same marriage, nor can we call his very probable intervention in any way an abuse of power. It is evident that Gabrielle had long since revealed to Henry the sad history of her nuptials, and when the King during the trial enjoined d'Amerval to acknowledge his impotence he did no more than urge him to confess to an infirmity that actually existed. Thus he only claimed a confession of the truth, in order to deliver from her hateful bonds the woman who was about to present him with his first son.

At the conclusion of the trial the King at once returned with Gabrielle d'Estrées to Paris, arriving on the 27th of December. He had only returned two hours from his journey, and was, still booted, in his mistress's room—she was then living at the Hôtel du Bouchage; near him were the Prince de Conty, the Comtes de Soissons and Saint-Paul, and some thirty or forty other gentlemen of the Court; de Ragny and de Montigny were drawing near to salute him, when a young lad, very short of stature, half hidden in the crowd, approached, and

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plunged a knife into him. The King was bending down to raise the two lords who were saluting him, and the blow 'only struck him in the face, on the right side of his upper lip, and broke a tooth.' The assassin, a lad of eighteen, was one Chastel, the son of a Paris clothier, and a pupil of the Jesuits.

On the next day Henry wrote to Duplessis-Mornay: 'You will have heard, from what I commended Lomenie to write to you, of this fruit of the Jesuits and the Leaguers, and how narrow was my escape . . .'

The punishment was not long delayed. On the 7th of January Jean Chastel was hanged in the Place de Grève, and his body burned. Another Jesuit, Guignard, who belonged to the same college, and shared with several of his order the regicidal doctrines of the preachers of the League, 'who had,' as Henry himself tells us in his correspondence, 'written several pamphlets and memoirs approving and upholding a similar attempt against my life,' was executed a few days later. Guignard's regicidal writings numbered nine in all. Referring to Henry IV., he wrote: 'And if, in the year 1572, on the day of Saint Bartholomew, the basilic vein was bled, we have now surely only fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire.' And later, more directly still: 'If the Béarnais can only be deposed by war, let us wage war: if we cannot wage war, let us inflict death upon him.' By a decree of the Parliament of Paris all the Jesuits were banished from the kingdom.

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I

THE PAPAL ABSOLUTION (1595)

THE magistrate's decision was signified to the two parties, or, more correctly, to their solicitors, on the 7th of January 1595. From that day the King did not lose a moment in making Gabrielle his titular mistress, as she would at that time have been called. The name Madame de Liencourt disappeared, and in its place we soon see the title of Madame la Marquise, and later Madame la Duchesse. She had her proper place at Court, and to her were presented the ambassadors, the great lords of the realm, and the magistrates.

Henry's first step was to procure signatures to the letters by which Cæsar was to be made legitimate. As with all letters patent, they only bear the date of the month in which they were drawn up—in this case that of January 1595. They were registered on the 3rd of February. The King recalls the state of the kingdom when it was placed in his hands—‘almost irretrievably ruined. . . .’ ‘It has been seen,’ he adds, ‘that we have succoured it and, by the grace of God, restored it to its ancient

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strength and dignity, nor have we spared in the task either our labour, our blood or our life. . . .’ He hopes that his courage and his strength may be inherited by those who come after him, and adds that ‘since God has not yet seen fit to grant us any children in lawful wedlock, the Queen, our wife for ten years, being now separated from us, it is our desire that, until He grant us children who may legitimately succeed to this our crown, we seek to beget elsewhere, in worthy and honourable manner, such children as may serve the crown faithfully, as others of like nature have been seen to serve it and to render it great and notable service. And having come to recognise the many graces and perfections, of mind no less than of body, that are to be found in the person of our dear and well-loved Dame Gabrielle d’Estrées, we have for several years sought her out for this reason, as being the subject most worthy of our love. We have considered ourselves entitled to do this with fewer scruples and less burden on our conscience in that we know that the marriage she had contracted with the *Sieur de Liencourt* is null and void, as is proved by their separation and the dissolution of the said marriage, which has followed in due course. And inasmuch as the said lady, after a lengthy courtship and the exercise of as much of our authority as we thought fit to employ, condescended to obey us and comply . . .’—a son was born who up to the present has had the name of *César Monsieur*, and his remarkable talents decided the King ‘—acknowledging and confessing him to be our natural son, to accord him our royal

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letters and render him legitimate. . . . ' Every word of this document ought to be carefully weighed.

Henry goes on to say that he accords the letters to Cæsar because ' . . . inasmuch as the stigma that is attached to the birth of our son excludes him from all hopes of succeeding to this our crown and all depending thereon, and also to our kingdom of Navarre and all our other property and the revenues of our other patrimony . . . his state would be but a poor one, were it not for this his legitimation, whereby he is rendered capable of receiving all the gifts and benefits which may be conferred on him both by us and by others. . . . ' For these reasons Cæsar was declared legitimate, and registered as such by Parliament without a protest.

The King of Spain had for five years been carrying on hostilities against the King without any formal declaration of war. He had endeavoured during the sittings of the States of the League to procure the election of his daughter Isabel and the Archduke Ernest, who was to marry her, in Henry's place, and he had had recourse to intrigue, bribery, and arms in his attempts to achieve his end. In the beginning of the year the King at length decided to declare war against him. On the 7th of April he gave notice to the Duc de Lorraine, enjoining him not to intervene in favour of the Spaniards, and also to the town of Besançon, pointing out to them that the religious pretensions of Philip were only a cloak to his ambition. In Bourgogne he rejoined Biron, who had begun hostilities at once, at the beginning of the year,

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and on the 7th of June Henry was able to give an account to his sister Catherine of the brilliant victory of Fontaine-Française, when the Spanish army was forced to retreat. His success in this engagement, while it reflected great honour and glory on himself, was favoured by the mistrust felt by the Spaniards for Mayenne and the Leaguers, whom they suspected of treason.

This year 1595 witnessed the complete reconciliation of Henry with the papacy, and the fulfilment of the task to which Gabrielle had devoted all her energies.

When Henry came to the throne Sixtus V. was the head of the Church. The Spaniards had taken upon themselves the rôle of defenders of Catholicism, and the Lorraine princes had eagerly embraced their cause. The Spanish faction predominated in the Sacred College. Sixtus, under pressure from the League and from Spain, and in part influenced by his own feelings of fear for the Catholic faith in France in the event of a Protestant King coming to the throne, had excommunicated Henry IV. and declared him incapable of reigning. He had also struck at him with temporal weapons, favouring the election to the throne of the old Cardinal of Bourbon and the lieutenancy of Mayenne, and furnishing the Leaguers with troops and money. But the opinions of the Pope were gradually being modified. Henry showed that not only did he respect the Catholic faith, and had no intention whatever of converting France to Protestantism, but, on the contrary, had charged the Marquis de Pisany

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to assure the Pope that he was himself about to become a Catholic. Some of the clergy and many Catholic lords had rallied round him, and it seemed that the League would no longer be able to stem the progress of the monarchical party. The Venetian ambassadors and the Grand Duke of Tuscany pleaded Henry's cause with the Pope, and called his attention to the ambition of the Leaguers and the designs of Spain. 'The League cannot exist by itself,' said Venice, who had no love for Philip II.; 'it must marry itself to Spain, and it will ask you to pay the dowry.' The Pope at length began to see that religion had become only a pretext and a means to an end. He decided that his position should in future be neutral, and gave orders to that effect to his legate, Gætano. But the League was as powerful at Rome as at Paris. The King of Spain was apprised that the Pope was wavering. The Count d'Olivarez received instructions, and a violent quarrel arose between him and the Pope; he even went so far, it is said, as to threaten Sixtus that he would have him deposed. A few days after this scene, on the 27th of August 1590, the Pope, after a very short illness, died. Men wondered whether Philip II., who had been the cause of the disappearance of his own son and of the assassination of the Prince of Orange, might not have poisoned the Pontiff.

As for the Leaguers in France, they openly and unrestrainedly displayed at the death of the Holy Father a delight that was almost indecent.

The all-powerful Spanish faction proceeded to

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the election of a new Pope, Urban VII., who only lived thirteen days, and was followed on the 5th of December 1590 by the Cardinal Sfondrato, who took the name of Gregory XIV. Immediately fresh bulls of excommunication were hurled at Henry IV., the clergy, and the royalist lords. The French clergy came together at Mantes to protest against these measures, and the royalist Parliaments of Tours and of Châlons issued decrees declaring against an abuse of power, pronounced the bulls void, and ordered them to be publicly burnt. The reign of Pope Gregory lasted no longer than ten months, but in that time he managed, in making subsidies to the League, to waste all the treasure amassed during the excellent administration of Sixtus V.

Clement VIII. succeeded Gregory XIV. He too belonged to the Spanish faction, and allowed himself to be persuaded by the Lorraines, in the first place, that Henry would never become converted to the Catholic faith; and in the second, after his conversion, that he was not sincere, and was only waiting until he should become master to persecute the Catholics and make France a Protestant country. It was long before Clement VIII. was induced to do justice to Henry's conduct, but from the moment in which he saw clearly through the intrigues of the Leaguers and the Spaniards he took up his cause as eagerly as he had before opposed it. The fate of Sixtus might have caused him to reflect; but to him it was as nothing, and the threats of Spain were disregarded. He himself sent to all the religious

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houses of France, and ordered them to pray for the King again as heretofore. The Capuchin Minims, among others, informed Henry IV. in April 1595 that the Pope had prescribed to them that they should pray to God for his prosperity, health, and well-being. Sixtus V. had refused audience to the Marquis de Pisany when he came as an ambassador from Henry. Clement VIII. had refused to receive the letters of the Catholic lords, who were on good terms with the King, and later had refused to see first the Duc de Nevers, then the Cardinal de Gondi, and lastly the Duc de Piney Luxembourg. But no sooner were his eyes opened to the sincerity of Henry IV. than he himself asked him to send an ambassador.

The King immediately despatched to Rome his Chief Almoner, du Perron, Bishop Elect of Evreux, to beg for absolution. By du Perron he remitted two letters—one to the Pope, full of protestations of his belief in the Catholic faith, and the other to the Duke of Tuscany, asking for his friendship, and begging him to assist his ambassador with his counsel, for he had ordered du Perron to stop at Florence on his way to Rome.

At Rome du Perron found d'Ossat, Bishop of Rennes, and in consequence of their combined influence the last remaining obstacles against absolution fell to the ground. On the 30th of April 1595 a consistory was held at Monte-Cavallo, at which the majority of the cardinals became converted to the opinions of the Pope, and Henry was admitted into the pale of the Church. On Saturday, the 16th

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of September, the ceremony took place publicly beneath the porch of Saint-Peter.

The two French prelates, in the name of Henry IV., submitted publicly to acts of penitence and humility which were perhaps a little too reminiscent of the Middle Ages.

The end so long desired was at length at hand, and all the world rejoiced. At the conclusion of the ceremony all the Frenchmen who were present at Rome,—cardinals, archbishops, bishops, theologians, priests of every order, and laymen of every rank,—went and sang the *Te Deum* at Saint-Louis-des-Français. Rome itself rejoiced and made merry over the event.

The good news reached the King when he was occupied with the siege of La Fère. It was brought to him by Alexandre d'Elbenne, a Florentine who had been principal major-domo to Queen Louise, gentleman of the bedchamber to King Henry III., colonel of the Italian infantry in France, and who since his return to his native land had remained a devoted adherent to France and to the King.

The affair at Cambrai came to an end at the same time, and in a manner as unfavourable to the interests of the King as the affair at Rome had been favourable. Gabrielle d'Estrées had throughout her life been the devoted friend of a man concerning whom his contemporaries held very different opinions. We refer to Balagny, the bastard of Montluc, the Bishop of Valence. The man was a bold adventurer who, as Governor of Cambrai, had

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taken advantage of the troublous times to make himself sovereign prince of the town. He had married Renée de Clermont d'Amboise, sister of the brilliant and dauntless Bussy d'Amboise. She bore some resemblance to her brother, sharing his courage, which was only equalled by her ambition, while her greed far outweighed her other qualities.

Henry was at Dieppe when in November 1593 Madame de Balagny came to him incognito, and on behalf of her husband offered him the sovereignty of Cambrai. Gabrielle was with the King, having come to inspect the important property her family possessed in Normandy. Madame de Balagny was wise enough to take her into her confidence. She offered Cambrai to the King on condition that her husband should hold it for him in fealty and homage. He was to receive in exchange the title of prince, to be made Maréchal de France, and be paid a sum of 140,000 écus. At the same time Monsieur de Balagny strove to join his fortune to Gabrielle's by offering other terms, and assigning to her the suzerainty of Cambrai, if the King would consent. As she was at this time in an advanced state of pregnancy it was also proposed that the suzerainty should be made hereditary in favour of such children as she should bear to the King. Gabrielle seems on several occasions to have deluded herself into thinking of an independent sovereignty for herself and her children. Her relations were quite frank as to their aims and ambitions, and there came a time when they even spoke of constituting in Champagne or in Franche-Comté a principality dependent on

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the Crown and held in fealty and homage by Gabrielle or her son Cæsar. With regard to Cambrai, Gabrielle contented herself with laying the proposition of Balagny and his wife before Henry, who signified his willingness to agree to the terms proposed to him. A few months later, in 1594, while the King was laying siege to Laon, Balagny won his permanent good will by sending him 500 horse, 3000 foot soldiers, and an abundant supply of ammunition. This aid, coming at so opportune a moment, enabled the King to make so strong an attack that the capitulation was signed on the 22nd of July, and Laon opened its gates on the 2nd of August 1594.

In 1595, the year to which we have now come, the Spaniards laid siege to Cambrai. The inhabitants sent deputies to the King, informing him of the extortions and the tyranny of Balagny and his wife, and begging him to release them from his authority, and so deliver them out of the hands of a despot. The King extolled their loyalty towards France, and sent them back to Cambrai, promising to follow soon in person with his army, drive away the Spaniards, and put their affairs in order. Before they withdrew the deputies warned the King that the inhabitants of Cambrai would no longer defend their town with the same devotion as soon as they heard that his Majesty refused to deliver them from Balagny. But Gabrielle persisted in praising her protégé to the King, and the deputies departed ill content. Henry proceeded to take the necessary measures for hastening the military operations

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against the Spaniards in Franche-Comté. Before he could get his army on the march he received valuable assistance from the Duc de Nevers, in the shape of troops, with at their head his son, the Duc de Rethelois. The latter could himself have gained entrance to Cambrai, but Henry, who for various reasons was delayed on the march, heard of the capitulation of the town while still on his way thither. The inhabitants had delivered it into the hands of the Spaniards, and the citadel in which Madame de Balagny had shut herself up had surrendered. She herself died on the same day in a paroxysm of despair: *Affirmando di morir contentissima poiche morira principessa.*

II

THE PEACE WITH MAYENNE

HENRY had long since renewed his friendly relations with the Princesses of the house of Guise, to whom he was so nearly related. During the first siege of Paris, in April 1593, the Duchesse de Guise and her daughter had obtained a passport from the King, and had taken up their residence in one of their castles. They came to Mantes when the Court was there to salute his Majesty and his sister, Madame Catherine. 'Madame de Guise and her daughter are coming to see my sister one of these days' wrote the King to Gabrielle on the 19th of April. The ladies of the house of Guise were clever women, very partial to intrigue. Catherine de Clèves, the widow

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of Henri de Guise, who was assassinated at Blois, although forty-five years of age, was still remarkable for her beauty and her wit. She had in her time been very gay and very fond of pleasure, and still preserved great sprightliness in her conversation. Her daughter, Louise de Guise, was still very young at this time, being no more than nineteen. In the *Adventures de la Cour de Perse* she describes herself as she was at this age: 'Daphnis displayed so many beauties and graces that there were none who saw her but thought that love was making use of her to wound hearts and make conquests'; nor did her contemporaries question the portrait. Sully relates that Henry said of her, when she was three and twenty, that she had 'a gentle and pleasant disposition and a lively manner, and is above all of good family, tall and beautiful and has the look of a woman who would bear fine children.' The Duchesse de Montpensier, who did not come to Mantes, but who during the two years that preceded her death, which occurred in 1596, lavished on Gabrielle every demonstration of affection, was some three or four years younger than her sister-in-law. She too had in her time been a beautiful and a brilliant woman, and it was thought that it was she who had placed the weapon in the hand of Jacques Clément. Certainly this woman, with her striking eyes, was no stranger to Jacobean fanaticism.

Gabrielle was present on the day on which the Duchesse de Guise and her daughter made their bow to the King at Mantes. The ladies were very curious to see her, for they had, of course, heard of her great

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beauty. They were accompanied by the Duc de Bellegarde. When we call to mind the fact that the King had but a few months before shown himself jealous of Gabrielle's relations with his chief equerry, we can easily understand how popular a subject this interview must have been with the romancers of the time. Bellegarde, wishing to set his master's fears at rest, paid open court to Mademoiselle de Guise, and even to her mother. Gabrielle, under the eyes of the King, and before him whom she doubtless still loved, but whom she had forsaken, must have been a prey to many conflicting emotions. The spectacle presented to the ladies of Guise must have been very interesting and calculated to make them forget the emotions called up by the siege of Paris.

Later, on the 22nd of March 1594, at the time of his entry into the capital, Henry paid his first visit to the ladies of the house of Guise. These Princesses, whose one desire was to save a few spars from the shipwreck of the League, a shipwreck in which all the ambitions of their family were lost, were anxious to curry favour with Henry, and therefore very assiduous in their attentions to Gabrielle. They constituted themselves intermediaries for their family, and in their turn chose Gabrielle as the medium through which they might approach the King and obtain the fulfilment of their wishes. It was in this way that Gabrielle came to be concerned in the peace with Mayenne.

The Princesses were markedly successful in their enterprise. The young Duc de Guise, brother of

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Mademoiselle de Guise, who in the preceding year, 1593, had been thought by Henry to be one of the most dangerous candidates for the throne, made his peace in November 1594, and was completely reconciled with the King, who presented him with the most important office then vacant, the governorship of Provence. It is seldom that we have occasion to say anything in praise of the Lorraines, but we must in justice remark that during Gabrielle's lifetime these haughty Princesses always showed her great affection and gratitude for the services she had rendered them. They helped her up to the time of her death. The Princes, whose reconciliation with the King she had facilitated, remained her allies and friends, just as they were the King's loyal and faithful subjects as soon as they had made their peace with him.

The treaty with the Duc de Mayenne was long in being brought to a conclusion. The principal negotiator was President Jeannin, magistrate of Dijon for the League. One of the difficulties that had to be solved arose out of the fact that the Queen-Dowager, Louise de Lorraine, protested loudly against pardon being accorded to the murderers of the King, her husband. Mayenne could not see his way to making peace with Henry unless all the proceedings taken out against him were annulled and all possibility removed of their being revived by any action on the part of the Queen. After much discussion an agreement was at length arrived at. The affair was finally settled at Follembroy, in that lovely château in the middle of the forest of Concy built

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by Francis I. One day in November 1595 the King, under the pretext of a hunting expedition, left the siege of La Fère for a few hours and betook himself thither to meet President Jeannin and signify his willingness to ratify the treaty. The edict of reconciliation—that is to say, the royal decree itself—was not definitely drawn up until January 1596. In addition to considerable sums of money granted to Mayenne, the payment of a debt of 350,000 écus, and the government of the Ile-de-France for his son, the King granted him a general amnesty in respect of the past, and gave into his hands three strongholds for six years—Châlons-sur-Saône, Dreux, and Soissons. Finally, all judgments, sentences, and decisions which might concern Mayenne as original head of the League were annulled. Even the murder of Florimond d'Alluge, Marquis de Maignelay, who had been suspected of wishing to hand La Fère over to the King, and slain at Mayenne's orders, was to be forgotten and condoned. The Duc de Mayenne asserted that the murder had been an accident, a deed committed in opposition to his wishes.

The King also promised to give a favourable hearing to the petitions of Mercœur and d'Aumale; they were not, however, included in the treaty. With regard to the Duc d'Aumale, Parliament had issued a warrant against him; the King promised to defer its execution, and even to suppress the warrant altogether, 'if he would hereafter observe a respectful demeanour.' In the treaty it was also laid down that 'the terms granted to the Duc de

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Joyeuse, the Marquis de Villars and others, be also granted to the Duc d'Aumale, provided he make it clear within six weeks that he is willing to accept them. . . .

'Thus was this Prince,' says Mezeray, 'by the goodness of the King and the help of the Marquise, rescued from the pit into which his wilfulness had cast him, and thus did he obtain the most favourable conditions ever granted in France by a king to his subject. . . .

Very good terms were also accorded to the Duc de Nemours in an edict dating from Follembroy.

But the two edicts that concerned Mayenne and Nemours met with great opposition from the Parliament of Paris, particularly that referring to Mayenne. Parliament only sanctioned it after two commands from the King, and it was finally registered on the 9th of April.

It seems that a secret treaty was also made between Mayenne and Gabrielle. De Thou, in relating that it was Gabrielle who had brought about Mayenne's reconciliation with the King, adds that he, Mayenne, promised, in the event of the King marrying Gabrielle, and thus rendering the children already born of her legitimate, to declare himself, his family, and his friends in favour of her children, and to assure them the throne to the exclusion of all other princes of the blood.

When all was agreed upon, and the treaty signed, Mayenne solicited an interview with the King.

On Wednesday, the 31st of January 1596, he came to Monceaux, there publicly to make his submission

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to Henry IV. Madame la Marquise, as Gabrielle had already begun to be called, having had the trouble of arranging the reconciliation, wished to have the honour of presenting the submissive and repentant Prince. She made great preparations for Mayenne's reception, and took care that the step he was taking should not be accompanied by any feelings of bitterness or regret. She arrived at Monceaux with her sister Diane only the day before, bringing with her a troop of cooks, musicians, and comedians. The cooks got to work without delay, and the others were lodged with the townspeople, with orders not to show themselves until they were summoned.

At midday on the following day Mayenne arrived, accompanied by six noblemen. On account of his enormous stoutness he had to be assisted from his horse by three equerries. Gabrielle awaited him at the door of the château, and, after having received him with extreme graciousness, she herself took him by the hand and led him to the King's chamber, where his Majesty, seated on his throne, was awaiting his arrival. The Duke on entering the room made three very low bows, and at the third, as he was about to kneel and kiss the feet of his Majesty, the King came forward with a smiling countenance, raised him by the hand, and embraced him, saying: Is it really you, cousin, or do I look upon a dream? And the Duc de Mayenne, with many obeisances, entreated the King to believe that the concessions he had written out and signed were engraved on his heart; the King then whispered

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something in his ear, and led him to his closet where they remained for some time together.

Later in the day they walked in the park. Monceaux had belonged to Queen Catherine de Médicis, and the gardens were laid out in a most elaborate style. The magnificent view from the front (now, alas, destroyed), which looked towards the setting sun, stretched away beyond the verdant, undulating park towards Trilport and the valley of the Marne and Meaux with its fertile plain. Truly a worthy frame for the distinguished personages united that day under Gabrielle's hospitable roof.

Henry led the way, and took a malicious delight in walking his stout cousin out of breath. Tradition still points to an uphill path where Mayenne had to ask for mercy. 'Take my hand, cousin; you shall be put to no further trouble on my account,' said Henry. In a tent hard by Gabrielle had arranged for her guest to be served with a wine which he was reputed to prefer to all others. Two small guns announced the beginning of the festivities. The weather, notwithstanding the time of year, was magnificent. The park became peopled with gods and goddesses, shepherds and shepherdesses, who sang the praises of the two heroes of the day; then at two o'clock in the afternoon came the dinner. The King, with Gabrielle by his side, was seated at a table apart. The Duke 'was at another table adjoining that of the King, which was called the nobleman's table—the two tables together making the letter T—and by his side sat Mademoiselle Diane

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d'Estrées, who was helping her sister to entertain her illustrious guests.' At the end of the repast the King rose, and drank the following toast:—'To the lasting friendship of myself, the King, with my cousin of Maine! To the eternal peace of my kingdom and its glory and happiness!'

After the dinner came the comedy—an allegorical, mythological play, after the fashion of the time, by the poet Sigongne, and the day was brought to a close by a sumptuous supper and a display of fireworks.

Mayenne on this day promised to be true to Henry and a friend to the Marquise, and faithfully did he keep his word in both cases.

Leaving Monceaux after Mayenne's visit Gabrielle and Diane betook themselves to Paris, where the latter was married on the 17th of February to the Maréchal de Balagny, who had lost his first wife, Renée de Clermont, not four months before. The wedding was celebrated with much pomp and ceremony at the Hôtel d'Estrées, Rue des Bons-Enfants. Madame Catherine, the King's sister, honoured the company with her presence; and on the 20th of February she and Gabrielle returned to Follembroy to be near the King, who was still occupied with the siege of La Fère.

While encamped before La Fère Henry heard that Calais had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards. Queen Elizabeth hastened to offer to help him to recover the town; but he refused to avail himself of her aid, knowing very well that her motives were not entirely disinterested, and

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thinking perhaps that Calais was better in Spanish than in English hands.

On the 13th of May negotiations were opened with the Spanish garrison at La Fère for the surrender of the town. They proved to Henry that they still had victuals to last them two months, and thus obtained very honourable terms; the capitulation was signed on the 22nd of May, and the Spaniards marched off with their arms and baggage.

Henry gave the command of the place to Annibal d'Estrées, Marquis de Cœuvres, Gabrielle's younger brother.

Before he left La Fère he received the news that Ardres had just fallen into the hands of the Spaniards.

III

GABRIELLE, MARQUISE DE MONCEAUX

To this year, 1596, there also belongs an important declaration made by the King in reference to Gabrielle d'Estrées and Cæsar, her son. Henry, by letters patent dated the 28th of January, submits that by those of the 3rd of February 1595 he had declared and acknowledged Cæsar to be his natural son, 'and, having rendered him legitimate, he desired that in all acts and privileges, whether in court or without, he should be held, thought and considered to be legitimate and capable of receiving any gifts and bequests made in his name, and likewise able to hold such charges, powers, dignities

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and offices as may be assigned to him and as he may be decorated withal, either by us or the kings who succeed us. And we have thought that one of the chief evidences of this legitimation will be to render the said Cæsar able and qualified to enter upon the succession of our dear and well-loved Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées his mother, which however cannot be unless the said Dame d'Estrées, of her own free will, gives her consent to the said legitimation, the which we hereby incite her to do. . . . We have desired to give and bequeath to her every honourable mark and all the privileges and emoluments which it is customary to give to mothers, and thus to please her in so far as in us lies. For these reasons, and at the advice of the princes, lords and other great and worthy persons of our Council . . . we declare, desire and ordain that our said dear and well-loved Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées, from this time forth, have and enjoy all dues and rights of guardianship, and likewise all gifts and other benefits and emoluments proceeding from us and the Kings our successors, and also that all acquests of the said Cæsar be ruled and administered during the minority of the said Cæsar by and under the authority of the said Dame Gabrielle. . . . It is also our wish that the said d'Estrées inherit entirely from the said Cæsar in the event of his decease without children begotten by him in honourable wedlock. . . . '

This important act, which gave the guardianship of her son into Gabrielle's hands and the right to succeed to all his possessions, at a time when all

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legal bonds of parentage with his mother were refused to a child in his position, was registered without any opposition in Parliament on the 19th of March 1596, and in the Chamber of Accounts on the 9th of the following August.

Gabrielle, to complete these letters patent of the 28th of January, presented herself, in the person of her solicitor, on the 16th of the following February, at the Record Office of Parliament, and declared that she agreed to and accepted the injunctions laid down in these letters patent—namely, the guardianship of Cæsar, the administration of his possessions, and his inheritance. The solicitor, Maistre Pierre Beauxamis, who represented her, added further ‘that the said César Monsieur be able and qualified to succeed in his turn to the said Dame de Monceaux. . . .’ The clerk who signed the deposition was Voysin. These two acts thus gave Cæsar the right, contrary to custom, to succeed to his mother, and his mother the right to succeed to him. If by letters patent the King could, by an act of his sovereign power, modify the custom on Gabrielle’s behalf, it is doubtful whether the declaration made by her before Parliament had any power whatsoever to authorise Cæsar to inherit from her. We shall see later what difficulties arose when Antoine d’Estrées, at the death of his daughter, asserted that he ought to inherit from her by virtue of the following:—‘Art. 311. The father and mother may inherit from their children, born to them in honourable wedlock, if the latter die without heirs, both real and personal estate, and, in default of them,

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the grandfather or grandmother and other ascendants.' The violation of this custom seems also to have been the origin of the lawsuit in 1651 between Cæsar and his sister, the Duchesse d'Elbœuf.

Cæsar was made Duc de Vendôme in 1598 by Henry IV., and Gabrielle was given the administration of the duchy. It was in virtue of her position as Cæsar's guardian that Gabrielle wrote on the 20th of February 1599 the following letter to the mayor, aldermen, villeins, and people of Vendôme:—

'GENTLEMEN,—I was very much surprised at the death of Monsieur de Vignolles, and can assure you that the King has lamented his loss, and greatly regrets him, in that he considered him full of affection and faithfulness in his service and in that of my son the Duc de Vendôme. You too have good reason to regret him, for I know that his aim and intention was to keep and preserve you from all harm. I hope that you may find a worthy substitute in the person of Monsieur de Harambure, gentleman-in-ordinary to His Majesty's bedchamber, to whom His said Majesty has given the post of Governor of the town of Vendôme and the surrounding country, and at whose hands you may expect good and gentle treatment, as you too must render him all due respect, honour and obedience, which I am sure you will, right willingly, and give him all the satisfaction he has a right to expect. I myself have accorded him the captaincy of the château, which fact should bear witness to you how I too esteem him; had I not full knowledge of his worth I should have opposed him, but on the contrary I

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do desire him for the post more than anyone in the world. And for this reason I exhort you afresh to dispose yourselves to admit him and honour and respect him as you should, and, resting assured that you will do so I will say no more, praying God, gentlemen, to keep you in His safe and holy keeping.

‘Given at Paris on the 20th of February 1598.

‘(Signed) D’ESTRÉES.’

It is natural enough that Gabrielle, upon obtaining her divorce, should immediately seek a different name from that of her husband, which she had borne up to then. Even before the divorce she had thought of abandoning the name of Madame de Liencourt, which had caused her so much bitterness, as is shown by the following:—

‘We, Gabrielle d’Estrées, *Dame and Comtesse de Concy*, acknowledge that we have received from Monsieur François Hotman, King’s councillor and treasurer of the royal treasury, the sum of 500 écus in ready money, granted to us in payment of a like sum which had been advanced by us at His Majesty’s command for certain affairs connected with his service of which he wishes no mention whatever to be made . . . etc. . . . , and in witness whereof we give our signature to this present at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on the 12th of November 1594.

‘(Signed) GABRIELLE D’ESTRÉES.’

This inclination to take the name of Concy, which accorded well enough with one who had but a few

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months before presented the King with a son in that very town, never came to anything. We never see any mention of the name again. Concy was at that time in the apanage of the Duchesse d'Angoulême, and it would have been impossible for Gabrielle to take a title which belonged by right to that Princess.

From the year 1595 Gabrielle took the name of Marquise de Monceaux, and by the King's authority she was also given the seignory of that name, although it belonged neither to her nor to the King. Monceaux was at this time part of the succession of the Queen-Mother, Catherine de Médicis, to whom it owned its origin. When the Queen died, leaving enormous debts behind her, her creditors combined and set at their head one of their number, Pierre Cadet, who proceeded to sell a great number of her demesnes, and was the defendant in a still greater number of lawsuits. During the time of the League many of its members had occupied the various castles belonging to the Queen-Mother. Not until the time of the tutelary government of Henry IV. were the creditors able to vindicate their rights and wind up her affairs. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that, in their gratitude to the King, they should have offered him Monceaux provisionally, and that Henry should as early as 1595 have installed Gabrielle there. It was there that she received the Duc de Mayenne in January 1596. Monceaux was only put up for sale on the 25th of the following March, on which day 'Sieur du Tillet, equerry, was, by a decree of Parliament, declared

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the purchaser (as being the highest bidder) of the land and manor of Monceaux, together with its appurtenances. . . . ' The whole went for 39,000 écus, or nearly 500,000 francs of our money. Du Tillet was Gabrielle's agent.

The name of Madame de Monceaux, which Gabrielle had borne for more than a year, and which we find in the letters of the various ambassadors, belonged to her at that time by right, and very soon she was enabled to add to it the title of Marquise. By letters patent 'given at Lyons in September 1596, sealed with a great green seal . . . ' Henry created, raised, and elevated Monceaux and its dependencies to the titles, dignities, and rank of a marquise, and Gabrielle d'Estrées to the rank of a marquise for her own enjoyment and that of her heirs.

It was about the middle of this year, 1596, in the month of July, that there arrived a legate from the Pope who was destined to play a very important part in France, intervening skilfully on Henry's behalf in his various peace overtures with the Duc de Mercœur, with Spain, and with the Duke of Savoy. This legate was Alexandre de Médicis, Cardinal of Florence, a near relation of the Duke of Tuscany, and a most worthy man, who a few years later mounted the throne of the Pontiff under the name of Leo XI. In order to show his devotion to the Holy See and his friendliness towards the Duke of Tuscany Henry was anxious to receive the legate with every mark of honour. Lesdiguières, Governor of the Dauphine province,

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met him on the frontier; and as Alexandre de Médicis traversed the provinces one by one the Governors went forth to meet him, and the nobles of the district mounted their horses, and acted as his escort. The King himself, with his new friend, the Duc de Mayenne, went as far as Montlhéry, and awaited him there. He was accorded a triumphal entry into Paris; and the little Prince of Condé, whom since his own conversion the King was bringing up in the Catholic faith, addressed him in his capacity of heir to the throne of France.

It was at this time, too, that Henry decided to call together an 'assembly of notables' and endeavour to face the financial embarrassments with which he was beset. The assembly was first convoked at Compiègne, but finally met at Rouen. The King decided to make a prolonged stay in the town of Rouen, which had for so long resisted his authority, and to impress the people by the sight of a large and brilliant Court, the like of which had not been seen even at Paris. The Marquise de Monceaux was the first to arrive, on Thursday, the 10th of October 1596, several days before the King, and took up her abode at the Abbot's palace of Saint-Ouen, an elegant building belonging to the beginning of the sixteenth century. On Friday, the 11th, and Sunday, the 13th, Groulart, the President of the Parliament of Normandy, came to greet her, as the King had commanded him. Henry arrived on the 16th of October, and did not leave until the 6th of February in the following year.

He called the 'assembly of notables,' signed a

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treaty of alliance with the Queen of England, was present at the baptism of the daughter whom the Marquise had lately borne him, received the papal legate with great pomp, and made a solemn entry into Rouen with a magnificent display of troops and an extraordinary escort of princes, marshals, and officers of the Crown, governors of provinces, lords, governors of towns, and officers of all ranks. During the winter the ambassadors, the high clergy, all the nobility of France, the heads of the sovereign courts, and the provincial magistrates followed one another to Rouen to render homage to the King and to pay court to Gabrielle.

Madame, the King's only sister, arrived at Rouen on Tuesday, the 12th of November. The aldermen decided to go out to meet her, and entreat her to grant the town a dispensation from closing the shops and places of business. The Chief Justice and twelve Members of Parliament went forward to address her, and the Justice was afterwards censured for having used the words: 'Most Serene Highness'—'a term which savoured too much of the flattery of the Italians,' said Groulart.

The town hardly knew how to receive so many visitors. Most of the great lords had brought their households with them, and the markets were ransacked to supply them all with food. The richest among them had to be content with the most humble of lodgings.

The municipality displayed the greatest zeal in all the arrangements. Triumphal arches were erected for the King's entry into the town, and

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allegorical statues and obelisks, fashioned according to the taste of the time, stood at various important points along the route. On the Seine there took place a naval fight between galleys and round-boats. The streets of the town were not lit at that time, and it was felt that so great a mass of people ought not to be left in darkness at the end of the short winter day. The governor, M. de Montpensier, ordered the police officers to command their centurions and tithing men to place 'at all cross-roads and at other places in their districts long candles, (six of which would go to the pound), in large lanterns which were to be hung up on posts.' The police greatly increased their vigilance for the protection of so many noble guests.

On Monday, the 4th of November, in the afternoon, the King opened the 'assembly of notables' in the hall of the apartment occupied by him at Saint-Ouen.

It was there that he delivered that celebrated speech, quoted so often, and in so many different forms, by historians. And yet the rough draft of the speech, written out and altered in Henry's own hand, is to be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

The King seems to have preserved the copy as a souvenir of this memorable day, for at the end of the speech he added, in his own hand, the words: 'Delivered by the King at Rouen, on Monday, November the 4th, 1596, in the afternoon.'

The text is written in a large, even hand, and bears sixteen erasures and several interlinary alterations: 'Had it been my desire to win the title of

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orator, I should have learnt some fine speech and delivered it to you with becoming gravity, but, gentlemen, my desires urge me to aim at far more glorious titles, and they are those of liberator and saviour of the realm. You know well, to your cost, (as I to mine), that when God called me to this throne I found France not only almost ruined but almost entirely lost to the French. By the mercy of God, by the prayers and good counsel of my servants, by the sword of my brave and generous nobility, all of whom I consider worthy of our finest title, that of gentleman, and by my own labour and toil, I have saved it from ruin; and, my dear people, you who stood by me at the beginning, I desire that now you should share with me this glory. I have not called you, as my predecessors used, to inform you of my wishes, but I have assembled you for the purpose of receiving your counsel and following it; I have called you, in short, with the idea of placing myself under your protection, an idea not often entertained by kings, by grey-beards or by conquerors; but the great love I bear my subjects and my heart-felt desire to add the two glorious titles of liberator and saviour to that of King makes everything seem easy and consistent with honour. My Chancellor will acquaint you further of my wishes.'

The text is terminated by an S, with a line through it, standing in the middle of the page, and the whole of the speech is written out by the King himself, in a hand larger than that in which he usually wrote.

From the care with which the text has been

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corrected and the exceptionally large writing we conclude that the King read the speech instead of reciting it. He says, moreover, at the beginning: 'Had it been my desire . . . I should have *learnt* some fine speech and *delivered* it to you with becoming gravity.' It would appear from this that he read it.

'The King,' says L'Estoile, 'at the opening of his States at Rouen, made a very fine speech, short and blunt after his manner, savouring too much, men thought, of the soldier.'

Madame la Marquise listened to the speech hidden behind some hangings, and the King asked her what she thought of it. 'She made answer that she had never heard a better; only she was surprised at what he said about putting himself under protection.' '*Ventre-Saint-gris!*' replied the King, 'I mean it, but I keep my sword buckled to my side all the same.'

A few days later at Saint-Ouen, on the 11th of November, Gabrielle gave birth to a daughter. On the next day the King wrote to M. de Harambure: '. . . Know too that my mistress was yesterday brought to bed of a very fine girl.' This letter is written, dated, and signed in the King's own hand; hence the date of the 11th must be the true one, although Groulart, who is usually so correct, gives the date in his Memoirs as the 2nd of November.

On the 17th of November the little daughter was christened. The whole Court was assembled at Rouen. The King chose that day as being the anniversary both of his birth and of the battle of

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Ivry. The ceremony was celebrated with as much pomp as if it had concerned a daughter of France.

'Four canopies adorned the church, one at the entrance, a second at the farther end, a third in the place where the infant was disrobed and a fourth at the altar.' The pages, the King's guards, and the Swiss were in attendance; the sound of trumpets and of violins was to be heard. The Prince de Conti carried the infant. The ceremony was performed by M. le Cardinal de Gondy; the godmothers were Madame de Guise, on behalf of Madame the King's sister, who was prevented from being present on account of her religion, and Madame de Nevers; the Chief Constable acted as godfather. Madame de Guise named her Catherine-Henriette; some say that she bore the surname of Vendôme.

The King was at this time on terms of very great intimacy with the Constable de Montmorency, and he declared that he wished Gabrielle's daughter to marry a son who had been born to the Constable in the same year, but was not christened until the 5th of March of the following year. On the 15th of November 1596 the King wrote to the Constable from Rouen: 'My friend, . . . I am well and so is my mistress and little Mademoiselle de Montmorency.' On the 20th he wrote again: 'My friend, . . . I am very well, thanks be to God, and so is Cæsar and little Mademoiselle de Montmorency, for whom I have been offered a husband of a good house and very rich, but I have sworn that she shall be Dame de Montmorency et de Chantilly. I

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trust, my friend, that it may be so.—I give you good-night.'

The King prolonged his stay at Rouen for a very considerable time, and even thought of building a residence there. In the letter of the 15th of November, from which we have already quoted, he wrote to the Constable: 'Last Wednesday we hunted the stag. . . . He was brought to bay in the outskirts of this town, on the spot where I shall place the garden of the house I intend to build.'

The winter which the Court spent at Rouen was full of gaiety, and ended in a brilliant wedding. Georges de Villars Brancas, younger brother of the Admiral who had defended Rouen and was massacred in the preceding year by the Spaniards, married a sister of Madame la Marquise, Julienne-Hippolyte. Georges de Brancas was known to the world by the name of the Chevalier d'Oyse. The death of his elder brother rendered him a very good match, and Gabrielle willingly gave him her sister, and presided over the festivities of the wedding, and persuaded the King to give the bridegroom the lieutenant-generalship of Normandy. The wedding took place on the 7th and 8th of January 1597.

The attentions showered on Gabrielle by the lords and ladies of the Court were unbounded. They paid homage to her in order to please the King, and he showed plainly that their conduct gratified him. Discontent, however, reigned among the people. Gabrielle was easily accessible, obliging, kindly; yet the public rendering of so much honour to a mistress wounded their sense of propriety, and

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seemed to them to set a bad example. From the time of her arrival alderman after alderman carried presents to lay at her feet, and when she left Rouen, together with the King and Madame, on the 6th of February, they all went in a deputation as far as Franqueville to salute her, as well as the King and Madame.

The Chapter of the Cathedral seems to have had more restraint, for we find it recorded that: 'It is to be noted that neither bread nor wine were administered to Madame la Marquise de Monceaux, His Majesty's great friend, for certain reasons alleged at the time, but at the present concealed.'

After his long stay at Rouen the King returned to Paris, arriving about the middle of February.

IV

AMIENS

THE feasts and revelry of Rouen were continued at Paris, the carnival being especially gay. The King and Gabrielle both went to the fair held on Ash-Wednesday. The King, it is said, bargained for a long time with a Portuguese jeweller for a ring priced at 800 écus, but did not buy it. He contented himself with buying for his little Cæsar 'a box of sugar-plums, on which were engraved the twelve signs of the zodiac.' He made offers for various things, but the merchants profited little by his presence at the fair.

On Sunday, the 23rd of February, the first day of

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Lent, the King inaugurated a masquerade of wizards, and with the Marquise by his side paid a visit to the various societies of Paris, escorted by the maskers. In this guise they presented themselves before Zamet and a great many other persons, some of whom were taken by surprise. The presence of the King among them was the cause of much satisfaction to his people, who were flattered by his condescension; they accorded both him and his mistress a warm welcome. The latter never left the King, but unmasked him and embraced him openly before them all. They spent the whole of the night in going about the town, and did not get back to the Louvre until eight o'clock in the morning.

A few days later, on the 5th of March, the baptism took place of the Constable's son, whom Henry intended for the husband of his daughter, Catherine-Henriette.

The papal legate performed the ceremony, and the King himself stood godfather to the child. Gabrielle was also present, magnificently attired in green. The King amused himself by arguing with her as to the number of diamonds in her hair—maintaining that instead of the twelve she was wearing she should have had fifteen!

At the end of the ceremony there was a splendid feast, followed by music, a ballet, and a masque, one following the other in quick succession.

On Wednesday, the 12th of March, the day before Mid-Lent, Madame Catherine, who resided at the Tuileries, invited the King and the Duchess to be present at a ballet. It was on this day that there

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arrived the sad tidings of the surprise of Amiens by the Spaniards, at the moment when the Court were amusing themselves, 'laughing and dancing.'

'... The King said aloud: "It is a blow direct from Heaven. The poor people, by refusing the little garrison I was willing to allow them, have ruined themselves. . . ." Then, after a moment's thought, he said: "I have played the King of France long enough; it is time I returned to the King of Navarre!" Then, turning to the Marquise, who was weeping, he said: "Mistress, we must put off our finery, and mount our horse and ride away to wage another war!" and at daybreak he was off.'¹

The Spanish governor of Doullens, a town situated on the frontier some seven or eight miles north of Amiens, and at that time in the hands of the Spaniards, was an excellent officer, as brave and daring as he was small of stature. Hernand Teillo Porto Carero was his name. Hearing that the people of Amiens had but a small garrison he decided to take the town by surprise, and on the 11th of March carried out his plan with complete success. 'The attack was made,' wrote Henry, 'at about 8 o'clock in the morning, while all the people were at church; the first steps were taken by some fifteen or sixteen soldiers disguised as peasants, their pistols concealed beneath their garments, who made a rush at the gate and made short work of the handful of townspeople who were left to guard it. An instant later there arrived upon the scene 400 horse, fully armed, who penetrated as

¹ L'Estoile.

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far as the market-place of the town, and the people were so completely taken by surprise that they offered no resistance whatever.'

The Governor, the Comte de Saint-Pol, tried in vain to save the town, and rallied round him some five or six of his people; but, finding himself at length abandoned by all, and that the sole object of the townspeople was to shut themselves up in their houses, he was obliged to save himself by escaping at another gate of the town. Henry, in his letter, which is addressed to his town of Lyons, attributes the fall of Amiens to the fact that, in spite of oft-repeated advice, the inhabitants had not kept a sufficient guard, and that, over-zealous of their privileges, they had never brooked any command we have given them or entreaty we have made that they should accept a garrison, if only in the shape of two companies of Swiss, to protect their gates. . . . Henry went on to assure the people of Lyons that, as he had never yet yielded to the blows of fortune, so he did not intend to do so now, and announced that he was about to set out for the frontier town 'with such of his nobility as he had round him and,' added he, 'we shall spare no trouble, no, nor our lives, for that have we never done when duty called us to avenge an insult.' On that very day he left his kingdom in the hands of the Chief Constable and his Ministers, and slept that night at Pontoise. The Secretary of State adds in a postscript to another letter to the Constable written by the King on the same night from Pontoise: 'The King has so much

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courage himself that he inspires it in others, but unless we receive help both in men, in money and in ammunition, it will go ill with us. I will write to you every day.' The King spent the night in drawing up instructions for the Constable.

As for Gabrielle, she left the ball given by Madame Catherine, and hastily got together all the money she could lay her hands on, an amount of some 50,000 francs, and handed it to the King to fill his empty coffers. She then set out in a litter, an hour in advance of Henry, marching with the first troops that started for Amiens.

The King stopped on his way at Beauvais from the 13th to the 17th, exciting all by his wonderful activity to share his zeal and enthusiasm. On the 13th he said to the Constable: 'In my efforts to get together forces of horse and foot I have written everywhere,' and implored him to procure guns, 'for without them,' he added, 'we can only scratch the enemy.' While attacking Amiens he decided to create a diversion by invading the Spanish border on the side of the Low Countries, thinking 'that we cannot stop the flow of our enemies' good fortune unless we put difficulties in their way in their own country.' He thought of everything, begging for ammunition, provisions, arms, money, and directing at the same time the supervision necessary for the safe conduct of the troops. He considered the advisability of making an attack, but from general motives of prudence he first assured himself of a good base of operations by repairing the fortifications of Beauvais.

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On the 18th the King was at Montdidier, where he was joined by the Maréchal de Biron. He spent the 19th and 20th there, and on the 21st was again on the road; on the 23rd he came to Picquigny, at the gates of Amiens.

At the end of March he made an attack on Arras, maintaining the siege of Amiens at the same time.

He led 6000 foot and 600 horse to within three miles of Arras; without a sound he reached the counterscarp; by a simultaneous attack on the drawbridges of the two gates of the town he succeeded in demolishing them both, but, less fortunate than Porto Carero he was not able to enter the town, and had to retire. The investment of Amiens was incomplete, help did not come in as he hoped it would and he complains of his isolation. ' . . . All France ought to run to help me. For my own part I willingly put my life at the disposal of the public safety, so dear is it to me, and I assure you that could I recover this loss to France at the price of it, I would hold it well spent and could think to find no more honourable tomb. . . . ' On the 31st he wrote to M. de Schomberg: ' . . . I am not well in my person and am assailed by so many needs and difficulties that I know no longer to what saint to make my vows, in order to find a way out of my unfortunate position. . . . ' On the 5th of April he announced to Duplessis that the state of his health compelled him to retire for a few days to Beauvais, ' where I am going to diet myself; for I have reason to fear that I am going to be attacked with gravel, from which I hoped I was in no danger,

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as you know. . . . M. de la Rivière has promised to cure me of this present ill and of my ills of the past. . . . My state is worse than that of the King of Navarre, for now I am helped by no one.' Gabrielle alone did not desert him, but tended him in his sickness, and followed him from place to place.

The King's health required a great deal of attention. His army remained before Amiens, but it made little progress. Help was wanted in the shape of men, money, and stores, and Henry resolved to seek for it in his own person.

On the 13th of April he returned to Paris, and addressed himself to the magistrates in the following terms:—

'Gentlemen, it is not care for my health alone that has recalled me from the frontiers of Picardy but that I may also call upon each one of you to think of the straits we are in, knowing that no one could better or more forcibly put the evil before you and obtain the remedy. You, in your goodness, last year succoured the poor, the infirm and the suffering of your town; I come to ask for alms for those whom I have left on the frontier. You have helped those who were in the streets, or in houses seated by the fireside; I ask for alms for those who are on active service, and who are serving day and night and risking their lives so that you may live in peace.'

He was kept during the whole of the months of April and May at Paris and at Saint-Germain on account of his health. He returned to camp in the early days of June, and was soon rejoined by

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Gabrielle d'Estrées, who did not like to be away from him. On the 13th, with the help of the regiment of Saint-Paul, and of Champagne, and a body of English soldiers, sent him by his ally the Queen of England, he obtained possession of the village of Cocoment, near Amiens. But the help he was waiting for came in with a tardiness that well-nigh caused him to despair, the money promised by various societies and townships was not paid, and his friends did not respond to his appeals. He had to go again to Paris on the 21st, and on the 30th of June he returned once more to his camp.

On the 8th of July he wrote to M. de Brèves, his ambassador at Constantinople: 'I have closed in my camp on the outer side, to guard against the coming of the enemy, and am leading my trenches close up to the town. The work in the trenches goes forward, while we await the coming of the rest of our army.'

On the 13th he wrote to Rosny: 'I hope in this manner to reach the ditches that surround the town of Amiens; we draw nearer to them every day. But if we had not promised our soldiers 30 sous for every six feet they dig, we should not by now have got so far.'

It is to be noticed that, while some devoted servants gave Henry every assistance in their power, others showed themselves entirely indifferent to his fate. Accustomed as they were to see the King himself bearing the brunt of every disaster, it was with great reluctance that they made up their minds to leave the peaceful lives

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their Prince had assured them by his successes and his wise policy.

But affairs had stood still long enough; the siege of Amiens must be brought to an end, for the enemy was gaining courage with every day the town held out. The Protestants too, taking advantage of the King's embarrassment, had come together to demand from him rights and privileges which he could not see his way safely to accord. The Spaniards who were shut up in Amiens, confidently expecting relief from an army assembled in the Low Countries, made fresh efforts to resist the invader. Their situation was critical, for the town was completely surrounded and blockaded by the King's fortified camp. On the 17th of July the Spaniards made a very desperate sally, which resulted in great loss of life. They fought hand-to-hand. More than 500 French were killed in the trenches, but the advantage rested with them, and in the end they again took up the position from which they had been for a moment dislodged. The Spanish army was approaching, and the King appealed to all—princes, nobles, and commoners—to come to his aid. But his reiterated prayers remained unheard. Twice did he write to the Comte de Soissons, his cousin (he who had wished to marry his sister), but each time in vain:

‘Now that he sees us knocking at the gates in good earnest, and on the eve of becoming masters of the ditches, the Cardinal is assembling forces on all sides to come and give battle or compel me to retire. . . . I send this messenger to acquaint

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you with our desperate case, wishing that you should know of it, and I beg you to come to me immediately on receiving this letter and bring with you the greatest possible number of my subjects and of your neighbours and servants that you can.'

The Comte de Soissons did not come; and yet he was a prince of the blood, whose high position in the State should have filled him with a sense of his duty towards the King. But there were still some faithful servants who never for a moment deserted this brave man and his valiant army. Rosny displayed throughout the siege an activity and a wise forethought for which history ought to be grateful; and whatever may be our opinion of his malignant character, of his egoism, his pride, and his insincerity in historical matters, we are nevertheless bound to do justice to the energy and activity of the Minister. Richelieu said of him that his questionable proceedings alienated more people from his master than his administration brought money to his coffers. It would seem as though in this campaign he aimed at giving the lie to those who, like the Cardinal, wished to damp the widespread enthusiasm felt for him. Certainly a good part of the success of this campaign was due to him.

On the 25th of August the King wrote to his Ministers assembled at Paris: 'It is certain that Cardinal Albert joined his army yesterday, and that the old Comte de Mansfeld is in command in the capacity of major-general and that he is approaching our ranks. . . .' All preparations

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were completed; it only remained for them to fight: 'M. de Rosny,' wrote the King, 'come to me . . . and bring a good horse with you, so that I may the better receive the Cardinal's benediction. . . .' On the next day the King appealed to the Constable de Montmorency, begging him to come and stand by him in the fight. He wrote a second time, on the 28th of August, to his cousin, the Comte de Soissons. On the 29th he also wrote to M. de Harambure, a cousin of Gabrielle d'Estrées, with whom he was very friendly: ' . . . Borgne, I was very glad to hear you were in Paris. If you would be in at the fight, hasten, for the enemy is even now marching upon us. I am about to mount my horse to go and reconnoitre. Be diligent, if you love me; and if you meet with any friends, bid them, too, hasten. Farewell.

'Given this Friday morning at 6 o'clock, in the camp before Amiens, 29th of August.'

On the next day Henry made a brilliant stand against the Spanish advance-guard. That very evening he wrote to his sister Catherine: 'With 200 horse and 150 carabines I have defeated them, with the loss of no more than 2 horse soldiers. 300 or more of the enemy lie dead on the field and 2 cornets have been taken prisoner.'

On the 4th of September Porto Carero, who was defending Amiens so valiantly, was killed by a shot from an arquebuse, and Jerome Carafa, Marquis of Montenegro, took over the command of the town.

On the 6th of September a cannon ball took off the head of Saint-Luc, Grand Master of the French

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Artillery, who at the beginning of the siege had had his knee broken, and was only just recovering from the effects of that accident. At length, on the 15th of September, the Cardinal of Austria appeared with more than 20,000 men. The Spaniards marched in excellent order, following the course of the River Somme, protected on the other side by a long line of their waggons, and having the artillery at their head. They came to within five hundred paces of the French camp. The King was away on a hunting expedition, and the Duc de Mayenne on this day repaid his debt of gratitude to Gabrielle by ably defending the part of the camp where she lay. While the first shots from the Spanish cannon were beginning to throw his men into some disorder Mayenne put himself at the head of the more hardened troops, and cornered the entrenchments. He was soon joined by the King and Biron, and the Spaniards were vigorously repulsed, and put to rout. On the following morning, at about three o'clock, the whole army withdrew in silence, to the sound of neither drum nor trumpet.

The result of this repulse was the fall of Amiens, which opened its doors to the King on the 25th of September.

The terms of the capitulation were most generous. The Spanish army retired with their arms and baggage, after stipulating that the brave Porto Carero should be buried in the cathedral, and that, in memory of his valour, his tomb should be respected.

The Spaniards as they left the town marched in

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single file past the King, who, contrary to his usual custom, was fully armed and sumptuously arrayed, and surrounded by a brilliant staff of officers and companions-at-arms.

At the moment when the siege was being carried on with unflinching energy an opportunity presented itself to Henry for showing Gabrielle how great was the love he bore her. Gabrielle's devotion to his cause was at this time manifested on several occasions. The tender care with which she had nursed him during his serious illness; her refusal to comply whenever the King would have removed her from the dangers and fatigues of the siege and sent her back to live in peace at Paris or Monceaux; and finally the generosity with which she had given the King all the money she possessed to pay his troops, determined the King to make public recognition of his gratitude. Gabrielle had purchased from Madame la Duchesse de Guise some important property which the latter possessed in Champagne, and of which she had been obliged to dispose in order to meet the many debts contracted by herself and her husband at the time of the civil war. On the 6th of July 1597 Gabrielle had bought the manor of Beaufort, and on the same day she purchased the barony of Jaucourt and the manor of Largicourt for 40,000 écus. Henry resolved to raise these important demesnes to a dukedom in favour of Gabrielle and her son Cæsar.

The letters patent with reference to this matter belong to July 1597, and were signed in the camp before Amiens. In them was extolled that virtue

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which Cæsar had shown from his earliest years. His good education, together with his natural goodness, had produced most remarkable results. He was still too young to sustain any title of honour, 'but having considered that there is no one nearer to him than the Marquise de Monceaux, his mother, that all she has of riches and titles will revert to those of her blood, and that she is in herself worthy of every honour, worthy, too, by reason of the family from which she springs, a family which first gave a marshal to France as long ago as two hundred years. Not to go too far back, we call to mind that her grandfather served under four kings, in all the wars and all the battles of his time, and always received some special notice for his bravery. His son, too, father of the said lady, who was brought up in the house of the late King Francis, held the office of Grand Master of the Artillery at the battle of Montcontour, and is now lieutenant-general of Picardy and of our good town of Paris, Governor of the Ile-de-France and the oldest member of the Council of State and a knight of Saint Michael and the Holy Ghost. His eldest son, the Marquis de Cœuvres, is of a pattern with his worthy ancestors. For these considerations, having regard to Cæsar as much as to the person of the said lady, seeing that Cæsar must reap the advantages which his mother receives and that the latter has bought the manor of Beaufort and the barony of Jaucourt, and that to these lands belong all the rights, tokens and qualities necessary for the upholding of the name and the title of

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honour and dignity of a duchy of France, we hereby raise the manor of Beaufort and the barony of Jaucourt to a dukedom depending directly in faith, homage and justice on the court of the Parliament of Paris alone. And seeing that it is a question of the person of our natural and legitimate son in the future and of the Marquise de Monceaux in the present, it is for us to designate the rank as that of the duchy of Beaufort, and to ordain that it is our wish that this duchy takes equal rank with all dukes and peers of the realm, no otherwise than would be the case had the duchy of Beaufort been created and raised immediately after the duchy of Montmorency, except that, by this present erection and the edicts of July 1566 and of May 1579, in default of heirs male this duchy may revert to the crown, a condition and derogation without which the said lady would in no wise accept our liberality.'

This was registered in Parliament on the 10th of July 1597 and in the Court of Accounts on the 1st of August following.

It would have been difficult to found a more important title than that of duke and peer of lands as ancient and noble as those of the manor of Beaufort and the barony of Jaucourt, both of which had belonged to the house of Clèves, and before that to the house of Foix.

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V

THE PEACE WITH MERCŒUR

NICOLAS, COMTE DE VAUDEMONT, younger son of the house of Lorraine, was married three times, and had fourteen children. By his first marriage, with Marguerite d'Egmont, he had one daughter, who became Queen Louise of France and the widow of Henry III. By his second marriage, with Jeanne de Savoie-Nemours in 1555, the Comte de Vaudemont had one son, Philippe-Emmanuel, and one daughter, Marguerite.

King Henry III., who loved his Queen as much as a man of his nature was capable of loving anyone, wished to marry his sister-in-law Marguerite to his favourite, the Duc de Joyeuse, and to attach his wife's young brother, Philippe-Emmanuel, to his person. Henry invited him to the Court of France, where he was first known by the name of the Marquis de Nomény, and was later made Duc de Mercœur by the King. With that unrestrained ardour which he always put into his new friendships, he wished to make his young brother-in-law one of the greatest lords of France. He married him in June 1576 to Mademoiselle des Martigues, the wealthiest lady of his Court, heiress to the houses of Penthièvre and of Luxembourg, only daughter of Sébastien de Luxembourg, Duc de Penthièvre. The King wished, further, to dispossess the Duc de Montpensier, a prince of the blood, of his government of Bretagne, and invest it on

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the Duc de Mercœur, in spite of advice given to the contrary by the chief men of his Council, who pointed out to him, but in vain, that his wife, issue of the house of Penthièvre, had long had pretensions to the sovereignty of the duchy of Bretagne, and relations in that province who were a menace to the King's authority. Their predictions were soon to be realised, and with fine ingratitude towards his brother-in-law, his benefactor and his King, the Duc de Mercœur abandoned his service to embrace the cause of the League. He hoped that civil disturbances would enable him to become an independent prince, and steal from the crown of France one of its brightest gems. After the King's assassination there appeared a book which was no less than an apology for the murderer, the privilege of printing which the author, one Le Bossu, owed to the Duke. Le Bossu had been installed by de Mercœur in the bishopric of Nantes, where he was able to compose his criminal work at his leisure. In it he declared 'the late King worse than Nero, Herod, Judas, . . . a tyrant in his realm, a traitor to the human race, a traitor to the Church. . . . This assassinator proceeded from the Holy Ghost, and was proclaimed saint and martyr, most worthy to be canonised! . . . The knife which slew the King should be preserved as a sacred relic . . .'; and so on.

After the taking of Amiens the kingdom was pacified, the League stamped out, and Henry had come to the end of all his hostilities save only that with the Duc de Mercœur, who still held

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Bretagne, and was the last of the rebels in arms. He refused to recognise the authority of the King. The Queen-Dowager, desirous of showing her gratitude to Henry for the protection he had afforded her, had endeavoured, vainly it is true, to obtain the submission of her brother, and bring him to reason. She insisted the more in that in this very year, 1597, she had just received at the hands of Gabrielle a striking instance of her generosity. The latter, hearing that the widow of Henry III., who had retired to Monceaux in the hopes of ending her days in quiet there, was about to be expelled by the creditors of Queen Catherine de Médicis, offered very advantageous terms, and allowed the Queen-Dowager the benefit of the negotiations. Mercœur, who was affected neither by the prayers of his sister, nor by considerations of duty, nor by the dangers into which his rebellion must bring him, at a time when all France was ready to acknowledge Henry IV., brought a storm about his head which would for ever have destroyed his own fortune and that of his family if he had had to deal with a prince less generous than Henry IV., and a woman less eager than Gabrielle to protect to the last all members of the house of Lorraine. In the early days of the year 1598 Henry determined to get together a large army, and go himself to reduce Mercœur to obedience by depriving him of his government of Bretagne. The latter had up to then been able to maintain himself almost as a sovereign, in spite of the Maréchal d'Aumont (who went there only to meet death) and the Maréchal

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de Brissac, for he was upheld by the States of Bretagne, the Parliament of Rennes, and a good portion of the nobility. ' . . . I set out to-day for Bretagne,' writes Henry on the 8th of February 1598 to his ambassador at Constantinople, 'in answer to a summons from my good subjects of the said country, who, being weary of the tyranny of the usurper, the Duc de Mercœur, are desirous of putting themselves under my protection and showing me their obedience. This indeed the people of my town of Dinan are now beginning to do, the same who, assisted by my town of Saint-Malo, have driven out the garrisons of the said Duke and are now their own masters and ready for my service. . . .'

The States of Bretagne entreated the King to enter the province with his troops, assuring him that his presence would do more to bring about the Duke's submission than all the armies of his realm. The Comte de Schomberg and the Maréchal de Brissac, the King's two lieutenants-general in Bretagne, added their prayers to those of the States. In fact, every gate was thrown open for him. The nobles of Bretagne came to him from all sides; they only knew the King by reputation, for they had spent their lives within their own province, but Henry was not long in attaching them to his person.

'One day, in particular, when His Majesty was surrounded by nobles, who were crowding in upon him, the captain of his bodyguard called out: "Gentlemen, you press the King too hard with your importunities." "No, no!" said he; "my nobles cannot press me too hard, nor do they ever importune

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me. If they approach me it is because they love me: it is with their help that I hope to put my enemies to flight.”¹ These words went straight to the hearts of the nobles of Bretagne, and there was no longer any need to fear that they would not hasten to the aid of so generous-hearted a Prince.

The Duchesse de Beaufort went with the King into Bretagne, and was herself destined to play an important part in the expedition. She wished to arrange a marriage with her son César Monsieur and Françoise, the only daughter of the Duc de Mercœur, and of Marie de Luxembourg, of the illustrious house of Penthievre. This marriage was to be the turning point of the negotiations. For years Mercœur and his wife had shown themselves willing to listen to overtures of peace, but as soon as it became a question of making a settlement they became intractable, and refrained from giving a definite answer, contenting themselves with renewing the truce, and remaining ready to take up arms if it were necessary. Gabrielle was already at Angers, where she received news of the expected arrival of the Duchesse de Mercœur, who had as yet returned no answer to the overtures made by the King and Gabrielle on the subject of Cæsar's marriage. Foreseeing new and interminable negotiations Gabrielle refused to receive her at Angers, and had the gates of the town shut to her. The Duchess was put entirely out of countenance, and retired to Pont-de-Cé, where she waited until the 6th of March, the day on which the King was due

¹ Dupleix, 'Histoire de Henri IV.' (1610).

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to reach Angers. She made her submission to the King with a very good grace, both in her own name and in that of her husband. '... If the deeds of the Duc de Mercœur in any way correspond to the fair words offered to me by his wife to-day, our business will soon be over; I mean to have done with it as soon as possible and to stop at nothing short of my due' (Henry to the Constable, 6th March 1598).

Gabrielle went to meet the Duchess, and they entered Angers together in the same litter.

It was said of the Duc de Mayenne that he knew not how to make either peace or war. The saying is still more applicable to Mercœur, who would in this case have received very bad terms indeed had it not been for the possibility of joining Cæsar to Mademoiselle de Mercœur in marriage, a union which the King had very much at heart. A few days later Henry wrote again to the Constable: '... I am convinced that I could not do better for Cæsar, for it would be the greatest marriage in my kingdom.'

On the 20th of March 1598 Henry addressed a circular to all the towns of his realm, bidding them '... give thanks to God, publicly, for the reconciliation with our said cousin, [the Duc de Mercœur]—with fireworks, etc. ...'

The negotiations had been speedily brought to a close during the early days of March by the Comte de Schomberg, the Presidents Jeannin and de Thou, Louis Potier, Sieur de Gesvres, Secretary of State, and Soffrey de Calignon, Chancellor de Navarre.

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The Duke's deputies had to submit to the wishes of the King, and Bretagne rose up of its own accord and recognised his authority. The most important conditions were the surrender into the King's hands of the government of the whole of Bretagne, saving only Blavet, which was in the hands of the Spaniards, and the pardon of all that the Duke had done in the past and of all who had followed his cause. The officers created by him were allowed to keep their commissions on condition of taking a fresh oath and receiving a new investiture at the hands of the King. Henry granted permission for the inclusion in the edict of a preamble in which the behaviour of the Duke was justified, 'with feasible reasons for his pardon,' in order that his actions in the past might never be brought up against him. And finally, the King accorded to the Duke large sums of money.

On the 31st of March, when all the terms of the treaty had been agreed upon, Henry wrote to the Constable: 'Cousin, the Duc de Mercœur, my cousin, came yesterday to see me at Briolé, where I was dining. As I have received from my said cousin all the submission I could wish for, I gave him to understand how agreeable his recognition of my authority was to me, and the share he had thereby acquired of your good graces. I leave the day after to-morrow for Nantes.'

The Duc de Lorraine had devoted himself zealously to the promotion of this peace. He had even sent Henri de Lorraine, the youngest of the sons of the Comte de Vaudemont, Bishop of

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Verdun, and half-brother to the Duc de Mercœur, to represent him on this occasion.

On Friday, the 3rd of April, the King by an act drawn up by the royal notaries at Angers, Guillot and Lorry, bestowed on Cæsar his duchy of Vendôme, which had been part of the domain of the princes of the house of Bourbon. 'The King has seen fit, by reason of his affection for Cæsar and by reason also of the projected marriage with the daughter of M. and Madame de Mercœur, which will be effected as soon as he comes of age, but without this marriage being the condition of the gift, to bestow on Cæsar, by deed of gift between living persons, the duchy of Vendôme in the county of Vendôme, together with its appurtenances and dependencies, in whatsoever they may consist; fiefs, demesnes, vassals, advowson, rights of appointment to the ordinary and extraordinary offices enjoyed by the former Dukes of Vendôme, forests of full-grown trees, meadow-lands, and all other manorial rights in general, without exception. . . .'

Seeing that the duchy received but a very small revenue, that most of the manorial lands and dependencies had been forfeited, some with the reservation of their being liable to be bought in again and others in perpetuity, and that the duchy was encumbered with many debts and mortgages, his Majesty promised that in four years time he would recover the lands that had been sold, and if they could not be recovered within the four years he would give to Cæsar such a sum of money as would enable him to buy other lands and manors,

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so that the revenues of the duchy of Vendôme might again become such as they were before the forfeiture of the land, and he paid besides all the debts with which the duchy was burdened. He also announced that he had 'deprived and dispossessed himself' of the duchy in favour of Cæsar, who would in future take the name and title. Should Cæsar die without issue the duchy would revert to the children whom the King had had or might have by the Duchesse de Beaufort, the males preferred. Madame, the King's only sister, ratified and approved the said deed of gift, and the act was signed by Henry and Catherine, and sealed with the royal seal in green wax.

On the 5th of April was signed the marriage contract between the new Duc de Vendôme and Françoise de Lorraine. The husband was four years old, and his future bride a few months older. We find the same signatures affixed to the contract as were affixed to the deed of gift of the duchy of Vendôme.

It was first of all stated that the said marriage should be effected as soon as the parties to the contract should attain the age at which a marriage could be consummated, his Majesty giving his word as King that it should be so, and the Duke and Duchess promising it on their faith and honour.

The King then promised Cæsar, besides the duchy of Vendôme, of which he was already in possession, a sum of 826,666 écus, to be paid to him or to Madame la Duchesse de Beaufort on his behalf. The Duke and Duchess settled on their daughter an income of 50,000 francs a year, and the annual revenue

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proceeding from the duchy of Penthièvre and the principality of Mercœur. At the time of the consummation of the marriage they promised to give their daughter 100,000 silver crowns, and jewels to the value of 50,000 écus. The Duc de Mercœur announced that he delivered the government of Bretagne into the King's hands, 'to be invested, if so it pleased him, and as he himself begged in all humility, on the said Duc de Vendôme, his future son-in-law.' To recompense the Duc de Mercœur the King promised to pay him 200,000 écus within two years, 'with which sum the said Duke and Duchess promised and engaged themselves to acquire lands and manors for the benefit of the said future bride, to whom they would eventually belong.'

In the contract it is mentioned that: 'There was also present, in order to agree to and sanction the said terms, the high and mighty Dame Gabrielle d'Estrées, Duchesse de Beaufort, mother of the Duc de Vendôme, who said that she held him for her true and principal heir, following the letters patent of His Majesty, verified by his consent in Parliament and the Court of Accounts at Paris, and in witness of the great affection she had for him she had given, in favour of the said marriage, by deed of gift between living persons, unconditionally and irrevocably, the duchy of Beaufort, the estate and manor of Vandeuil, the estates of Assy and Saint-Lambert.' The dowry furnished by Gabrielle alone thus amounted to about two and a half millions of our money, estimating the manors at the price given for them at the time they were purchased.

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And further, it is stated that: 'In the event of either of the parties to the marriage, having reached the age of puberty,' refusing or delaying to consummate the marriage, a penalty of 300,000 écus 'would have to be paid.'

The minute of the deed bears the signatures Henry, Catherine, Philippe-Emmanuel de Lorraine, Marie de Luxembourg, Gabrielle d'Estrées, and, lower down, Neufville, Potier, and Forget.

The two children were immediately afterwards betrothed by the Cardinal de Joyeuse in the château of Angers, where the King and Gabrielle were residing. Magnificent festivities celebrated the occasion. The whole Court was summoned to Angers, whither they hastened eagerly, and where they were speedily joined by the nobles of Bretagne and the neighbouring provinces. We find evidence in his correspondence of the care with which Henry arranged for all the foreign ambassadors to be present at the betrothal.

On the 15th of April the King appeared at Nantes with Gabrielle d'Estrées: the town and the château had been delivered to him several days earlier by the Duc de Mercœur. On the 19th Henry wrote to the Constable: 'My friend . . . , God has this day presented me with a son who promises to be no less beautiful than my son of Vendôme.' Gabrielle had just given birth to Alexander, called the Chevalier de Vendôme, who was legitimised in the following year by letters patent dating from Fontainebleau in the month of April 1599. The King therein declares that he renders Alexander legitimate for

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the same reasons that Cæsar and Henriette were rendered legitimate.

Gabrielle was obliged to remain in Bretagne in order that her health might be restored, and that she might show the Bretons their new governor, whom the King had also made Captain of the château of Nantes and Governor of the town. From this day on the name of 'Capitaine César' was often given to his son by the King.

VI

THE EDICT OF NANTES—THE PEACE OF VERVINS

' . . . As for my news,' wrote Henry to the Duc de Caumont la Force on the 5th of May 1598, 'I have to tell you that, having reduced this province to obedience, as soon as I have made a tour as far as Rennes, Dinan and Saint-Malo, whither I am now about to set out, I shall return by the borders of Picardy, hoping to reach Paris by the end of the month. I have put an end to the matters concerning religion, and on that side my spirit is at rest. . . .'
On the 2nd of May he wrote to Lesdiguières, Governor of the Dauphiné: ' . . . Monsieur de Lesdiguières, you have been informed of the negotiations for peace that are being carried on at Vervins between my ambassadors and those of the King of Spain and the Duke of Savoy. Things have gone so well that it has been arranged that nothing shall be undertaken nor any act of hostility be offered one to the other for one month counting from

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to-day. I beg you to observe the same on your side.'

Here, then, were two important items of news: the edict regulating the position of the Protestants of France, and the treaty of Vervins, by which peace was restored throughout Europe.

The edict was sealed at Nantes on the 13th of April in the presence of Gabrielle d'Estrées. It attaches to the name of Henry IV. the honour of having been the first to associate with the exercise of authority the practice of religious tolerance and respect for the beliefs of others. To this edict we must also attach the name of Gabrielle, who, together with Madame Catherine and the Prince of Orange, worked with a wisdom and success worthy of so good a cause—first, to bring about the moderation of the unjust demands made on all hands; secondly, to persuade the King's counsellors to make the necessary concessions; and finally—and this was the hardest and most tedious part of all—to obtain the adherence of the magistracy.

Henry, and Gabrielle with him, on this occasion put into practice ideas far in advance of their time.

The Huguenot conspiracy of 1560 began the era of religious wars. Directed as it was against the Guises, it was put down with the life's blood of the Protestants, whom the Lorraines perfidiously charged with being the authors of a plot that lay in the heart of all good Frenchmen. The Guises were clever enough to induce Francis II. and the majority of his people to believe that war against the Guises meant war against Catholicism. This period

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of intense strife, of persecution, and of massacre was definitely brought to a close on the 13th of April 1598, when Henry IV. signed the Edict of Nantes, in the very town where the Amboise conspiracy had been hatched.

The first truce in this impious struggle was brought about by the Edict of Poitiers in 1577. This royal edict assured to Calvinists the enjoyment of civil freedom, perfect liberty of conscience, and, within certain limits, freedom of worship.

But Henry III. had no wish to be true to engagements which fear alone had caused him to contract, and the pressure put upon him by the League was not long in bringing about frequent violations of the edict. Matters remained thus until 1589. A policy in which there were no elements of greatness, and of which the liberty of his people formed no part, profited the last of the Valois but little. He alienated all his Protestant subjects without in any way satisfying the Leaguers.

Henry IV. did indeed re-establish the Edict of Poitiers at his accession. But this edict no longer satisfied the Protestants, who now claimed the right to have a share in the various offices of the realm. It was not the moment in which to raise a question so likely to excite the anger of the Catholics, and the King adjourned the matter until the next meeting of the States-General.

His whole policy during the first years of his reign, and up to the time of the Edict of Nantes, was directed to one end, that of bettering the lot of the Protestants. Unfortunately, his loyal in-

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tentions were misunderstood even by his fellow Protestants. In July 1591, by the Edict of Mantes, the Edict of Poitiers was fully re-established. On the 16th of May 1593, on the eve of the King's abjuration, the Catholic lords of the royalist party made a public declaration which was calculated to set the minds of the Calvinists at rest. The lot of these people, so grievously persecuted of old, was indeed changed. They enjoyed complete liberty from the point of view of their civil rights, and a position identical with that of the Catholics in all that concerned their nationality, their heritage, and their wills. They were allowed perfect liberty of conscience, and were no longer in danger of being persecuted for their beliefs. In the exercise of their worship alone had they to submit to certain restrictive regulations. Religious service was forbidden in forty towns with a population of over eight hundred, and in seventeen bailiwicks with a population of over three hundred and twenty.

In 1595 all the Parliaments, one after the other, and that of Paris last of all, had, in obedience to the King's command, to register the Edict of Poitiers.

This edict, for which the Protestant party had fought for twelve years, did not now any longer satisfy it. In the eyes of the Protestants the accession of Henry IV. ought to have marked the triumph of their sect and not the pacification of his kingdom. We must in fairness recognise that they were as exacting as the Catholics, and that Henry IV. was approved of by neither the one nor the other. There

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was an ulterior design common to both, that of persecuting their adversary. The tolerance that lay in the heart of the King formed no part of the ideas of the sixteenth century. Can we be certain that even to-day our contemporaries have that respect for the beliefs of others, and the open manifestation of such beliefs, that the head of the house of Bourbon then had?

We ask to-day how it was possible that troops of French soldiers could, under pretext of being Protestant, abandon Henry at the siege of La Fère, refuse to obey his summons at the siege of Amiens, and in the end compel him to yield to their exigencies in regard to the edict? But we must hasten to add that the Catholics at that time acted not one whit better, and that on both sides Henry had to deal with sectaries who failed totally to understand his point of view. In the face of so many difficulties overcome, the gratitude of all tolerant and enlightened spirits must go out to the Béarnais for having accomplished his task without being either embittered or discouraged.

After the establishment of the Edict of Poitiers there were only two questions to be decided: liberty of worship and the granting to Protestants of the right to fill public offices.

Liberty of worship was by the Edict of Nantes allowed in the châteaux of the judges of the higher courts for themselves, their vassals, and all whom they wished to admit, without restriction as to number. The judges of the lower courts could not receive more than thirty strangers. The reformers

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in every bailiwick had the right of performing their acts of worship in their various localities. And finally the royal treasury was in all cases to provide the stipends of the ministers, and the latter were to be authorised by the King to receive donations and bequests.

The reformed worship was forbidden in those ancient towns of the League that had stipulated for its exclusion by special treaty, and it was further forbidden in towns where there were no Protestants and in those where public worship would be a danger to the public peace. As a fact, Henry throughout his reign was always exceeding his promises, and he gave his sanction to the celebration of public worship wherever it was demanded.

The creation of Chambers in which the members were equally divided in opinion assured the administration of impartial justice to the Protestants in all the Parliaments.

The reformers were declared capable of acting in every civil capacity, as well as in numerous military capacities.

The edict was drawn up and signed, but the more difficult part had still to be performed, that of obtaining the consent of the Parliaments.

It will ever be to the glory of Gabrielle d'Estrées that she thoroughly understood the King's mind and throughout her life stood by him as a useful and an active ally. She took advantage of the influence gained by her beauty and her position to take part in the struggle that had to be maintained

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both with the Protestants, who were insatiable, and the Catholics, who would give way in nothing. It was no longer a question of her encouraging the soldiers by her presence in the camps; her present rôle suited her better, for it was played at the Court, and it was from the society of the period that she recruited partisans to the tolerant ideas of the King. She imparted to her propaganda an earnestness which was disquieting to the Catholics and especially troublesome to the Parliamentarians. One day in December 1598, when the quarrel was at its height, those counsellors who were of opinion that to grant to Protestants the right of filling public posts was a danger to the safety of the State, demanded an audience of her. President Séguier spoke in the name of his colleagues. This brave woman, who had not trembled before the cannon of the Cardinal of Austria at Amiens, was not one to be daunted by the red robes of Parliament. She effectually silenced them, and refused to intervene with the King on their behalf in the manner demanded by the magistrates. 'She knew full well what was the King's wish in this respect and that he would not do otherwise; nor did she see any good reason for wishing to prevent those of the religion, who had been good servants to the King, from entering the States, seeing that he allowed it to the Leaguers, who had taken arms against His Majesty.'¹

The Parliamentarians withdrew, and M. le Duc de Bouillon, who since the King's conversion had

¹ L'Estoile: 'Journal de Henri IV.' (December 1598).

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taken upon himself the leadership of the Protestants, came to thank Gabrielle for the words she had spoken. On the 25th of February 1599 the edict was registered in Parliament.

Gabrielle d'Estrées died a few weeks later, before she was able to throw a veil over the scandal of her life by becoming the lawful wife of the King. But she has merited neither reproach nor insult; the work she did on behalf of religious peace and amity procures for her the pardon of all. It was the honour of her life to have aided Henry in the accomplishment of this work of tolerance and patriotic wisdom.

The treaty of Vervins was concluded on the 2nd of May 1598, published throughout the kingdom on the 7th of June, and solemnly sworn by the King at Notre-Dame on the 21st of the same month. The legate of Florence displayed great skill in helping to bring matters to a conclusion. In the preceding year he had received assistance from a Sicilian monk, the Director-General of the Franciscan Friars, whose zeal for peace had led him in turn to Madrid, and to the camp before Amiens, under the pretext of a general visit to the houses of his order. Bonaventure Catalagirone was very well received by both sovereigns, and it was he who laid the foundations of the peace which cemented the treaty of Vervins. Rome now became Henry's most faithful ally. The year 1598, which saw the establishment of religious peace, saw also the ratification of peace throughout Europe.

GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES AND SULLY

I

THE 'ECONOMIES' AND THE 'MÉMOIRES'

SULLY was the favourite servant of Henry IV., and exercised an influence over him that only increased as time went on, but it must be acknowledged that if his contemporaries did justice to his good qualities they certainly did not love him.

Superintendents were never popular. More often than not their extortions, and the riches they so shamefully amassed, were the cause of their unpopularity. As for Sully, we believe that he was honest, and that he owed his personal fortune to the King's liberality, to his skill in the management of his affairs, and above all to his economy. What he did for himself he did also for the State. The order that he succeeded for the first time in establishing in the financial condition of his country, the large sums that he brought to the royal treasury—discovered at the end of Henry's reign—were the result of his wisdom and his probity. But if he was capable as a minister he was malignant, brutal, morose, and churlish as a man. The hatred that he called down on his head survived him. Marbault,

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a fellow-Protestant, secretary to Duplessis-Mornay, has left behind him a book which bears witness to the animadversion of all those who had anything to do with him. It contains an unjust appreciation of the man, but, it must be admitted, a criticism of the historian for the most part well founded enough.

The words of Marbault were, however, not heeded, nor did they do anything to lessen the esteem in which Sully's great work was held for so long. No one has spoken with greater authority; no one has been listened to with more perfect confidence; no one has, moreover, traduced the memory of Gabrielle d'Estrées with greater injustice, perseverance, or success. His hatred for her is manifested on every page, and when the *Economies* themselves do not bear witness to it, it is shown in false documents attributed to some third party introduced to complete the picture and present her in the most ugly light possible. We cannot attempt to write a faithful history of Gabrielle d'Estrées without making a very careful survey of Sully's work and testing his sincerity as a historian.

The aim of the author of the *Economies* does not seem to have been to hand down to posterity a history of his time, but above all to pose as the oracle of the reign of Henry IV. He only glorifies the King to glorify himself, and on occasion he belittles him, when the glorification of his own person warrants it. According to him 'all the wise measures of the King were the outcome of his advice. It was he who dissuaded him

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from all his possible mistakes. Henry IV. owed his fortune to the counsels of Sully: this is the burden of the whole book. And further, he disparages all the notable men of his time to the utmost of his power, in his jealousy sparing no one, Huguenots and Jesuits, Catholics and *Politiques*, d'Épernon as well as du Plessis, Lesdiguières as well as the Comte d'Auvergne, friends, enemies, relations, the King's mistresses, colleagues or predecessors, all are alike guilty or suspect, all are alike submitted to merciless censure.¹

A long period of disgrace, beginning shortly after the death of his master; the feeling that the years were running on without offering any hope of his regaining power; the sight of the squandering of public money, which, thanks to him, had reached so very considerable a sum—all helped to render his old age bitter and to make him a most unjust critic of others.

He also suffered very keenly in his relations with his own family. By his marriage with Anne de Courtenay he had had one son, the Marquis de Rosny, who inherited from his mother only a very small property. The great wealth of the Superintendent only came with the years, through his second marriage, and from the high posts held by him. The greater part of his wealth would eventually have to go to the children of his second wife, Rachel de Cochefilet. He wished, however, to assure to his eldest son, who inherited the title, a position worthy of his rank, and he obtained for

¹ Bazin, 'Histoire de Louis XIII.'

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him the reversion of his offices of Grand Master of the Artillery and Superintendent of the Fortifications and of Governor of Mantes and Jargeau. He made him besides, in 1609, a gift of an income of 50,000 francs a year arising out of real estate, and in the following year he provided for the two sons who were the issue of his second marriage, César and François de Béthune, settling upon them an income of 20,000 francs in real estate, to revert to the survivor in the event of one of the two dying without issue. And finally, he married his two daughters, the elder to the Duc de Rohan, the younger to the Marquis de Mirepoix, giving to the latter a sum of more than 500,000 francs on the occasion of her marriage.

It would seem that he had thus faithfully fulfilled his duties as a father. But he complains bitterly of the ingratitude of his younger daughter, whom he had established so well, and his eldest son caused him the very gravest anxiety.

The Marquis de Rosny was as extravagant as Sully was careful and prudent. His foolish expenses, of which the father was for a long time unaware, exposed Sully at length to the solicitations of his son's creditors. He had been imprudent enough to remain in joint possession of the property of his eldest son, and not before he had paid away more than 300,000 francs to meet his debts did he separate from him. At the death of the Marquis de Rosny, those of his creditors, and they were many, who were not disinterested still attempted to gain an advantage out of this community of property,

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and brought charge after charge against Sully. They were the more dangerous in that, during the troubles of the beginning of the reign of Louis XIII., M. le Prince exacted from the Superintendent, whose enemy he was, a promise that he would hand over to him all those of his manors that bordered on his own or were situated in his province. Sully sold them to him for very high sums, so he says, but he could never induce M. le Prince to pay him. The latter even endeavoured during the religious disturbances to acquit himself of the debt by exhorting Louis XIII. to confiscate all Sully's property. Happily, peace intervened, and an arrangement was come to by which M. le Prince consented to meet his liability by giving to Sully other lands in exchange. Sully still thought he had made a good bargain. But among the lands handed over to him were included many manors entailed on his children, and notably on his eldest son. The creditors of the latter contested Sully's right to entail lands which he had received in exchange from M. le Prince. Sully was obliged on this same occasion to plead against his grandson, Prince d'Henrichemont, who in default of the Marquis de Rosny had inherited the title. These lawsuits seemed never-ending. Difficulties of all kinds in this way embittered the solitude of the Superintendent. He died at the age of eighty-two, on the 22nd of December 1641, eight days after the loss of his last case before the King's Council.

His pride, the overthrow of all that Henry IV. had striven to accomplish, in which he himself had

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had so large a share, domestic troubles—all combined to deprive Sully of the calmness and impartiality necessary for writing a history of his time.

The *Economies*, as everyone knows, are in form extraordinary enough. His secretaries hold the pen, and relate to Sully himself events and affairs in which he has taken part. Without being able definitely to fix the time at which the writing began it would seem from one passage that his secretaries set themselves to their task long after the death of Henry IV., after the publication of many different works on his reign, and when the old Superintendent had been bitterly incensed at their appreciations of the King. The four secretaries, espousing their master's cause, made abstracts of the documents and the vast correspondence that he had collected from the time of his youth, and then proceeded to write to Sully's dictation. The latter had no thought other than the satisfaction of an old man's vanity, and to that end he made facts bow to his will, not shrinking before alteration or substitution of documents if thereby he might the better deceive posterity.

Thus were the first two volumes composed, the only ones written in his lifetime, and printed at his château in 1638. They begin at the year 1570 and end in 1605, with a speech of apologetics, a laudatory epilogue and a fulsome panegyric of the life and work of the Superintendent, addressed to him by his secretaries.

The work was continued after his death by two of the secretaries and the Abbé Jean le Laboureur.

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The recital is carried as far as the time of Sully's disgrace—that is, up to 1611. Material sufficient for two new volumes was obtained by collecting all the documents, memoirs on various questions, and letters from the papers left by the Superintendent, and the whole was printed and published in 1662—that is, twenty-one years after his death.

There are thus two distinct parts to this important work, one of which was completely out of Sully's control. Since the compass of our work does not exceed the first part—that is to say, the first two volumes—it is with justice that we impute to Sully himself the wilful errors, the inaccurate theses, and the manufactured documents—all of which have but one end, the exaltation of the author. This end has, moreover, been attained more successfully than Sully could have hoped, and to the incontestably good qualities of the man as an excellent administrator have been added a list of virtues, which, in the eyes of most people, surround the figure of Sully as with an aureole. His fame grew especially during the eighteenth century. But it is not the *Economies Royales* only, it should be remembered, that effected this. The book is very heavily written, in a most digressive style, and the course of the narrative is constantly interrupted by the reproduction of documents; in fact, the *Economies* drag the very pen out of the hand of the student who reads them. It is but tedious reading for him who wishes only for a general knowledge of the subject or reads for the sake of recreation. These weighty folios, eagerly read as

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they were by those who had mingled in the affairs of the early years of the century, were not long in being completely neglected. After one short period of curiosity it would seem that they were no longer consulted, except by the historian.

About the middle of the eighteenth century an elegant and cultured writer conceived the notion of writing the *Mémoires de Sully*. He employed the *Economies* as his material, and did what Sully himself ought to have done, instead of leaving it in the hands of his secretaries. Under the pen of the Abbé de L'Ecluse des Loges the narrative assumes an entirely different character; he makes Sully the speaker, and the use of the first person necessarily brings with it the abandonment of most of the extravagant praise, and of many of the wearying compliments, lavished on their master by the secretaries. Thus modified, the vanity of the Superintendent becomes bearable. The Abbé has no bitterness, no hatred against the contemporaries of Henry IV.; sharp censure, implacable rancour stand out no longer in the same relief; the angles are softened, and the bitter shafts of the *Economies* seem to lose their sting in the *Mémoires*. The documents and letters quoted at such length by the secretaries disappear almost entirely, and only serve as a background to an elegant and attractive narrative. The man who tells the story is, moreover, a scholar, and himself a collector of old documents, having reaped a rich harvest from the manuscripts in the Royal Library, and well versed in the history of the time. When

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occasion demands he can be relied upon cleverly to gloss over error, and his work is enriched by excellent notes. The glaring faults disappear, and a very readable book remains, which had a great success, was read by everyone of any note in the second half of the eighteenth century, and has made the name of Sully popular to an almost incredible extent.

The worship of the letter and the almost religious observance given to documents have caused the *Mémoires* to be completely neglected. This very proper desire for truth and exactness, to which we are nowadays so firmly attached, has placed us once more face to face with the secretaries. The popularity of the *Mémoires* has rebounded on the *Economies*; many now confuse the two. It is generally believed that the work defies all criticism, that Sully is an arch-saint against whom there is nothing to be said. As a matter of fact, those who have closely examined Sully's work do not share the illusions of Michelet and so many of his predecessors.

The examination we are about to make will naturally be restricted to the part dealing with Gabrielle d'Estrées. In the *Economies* are contained many serious charges against the favourite. Sully expresses doubt as to whether Henry was really the father of Gabrielle's children, and, when he is not himself engaged in abusing Gabrielle, he gets Sancy, Queen Margaret, and an ancient domestic to abuse her, in the most violent language. It is for us not indeed to reinstate this woman,

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but to endeavour to give her her true place in history.

It is our duty to discover what is the origin and what the value of certain documents cited by Sully in support of his malicious tales.

II

LETTERS THAT HAVE BEEN TAMPERED WITH AND LETTERS THAT HAVE BEEN FORGED

SULLY quotes a very great number of letters purporting to have been addressed to him by Henry. Almost all of them start with the words 'My friend.' Such familiarity on the King's part flatters him, and makes him stand well in the eyes of posterity. There is nothing at all surprising in it, for Sully entered the service of Henry IV. at the age of eleven, and shared both his good and his bad fortune; his father, too, had served the house of Navarre. But, as a fact, almost all those of Henry's letters reported by Sully, of which the originals or ancient copies have been discovered, begin with the words 'M. de Rosny,' and later contain the commonplace and customary expression 'My cousin.'

In many cases in the *Economies* Sully has altered letters for no apparent reason. For example, on the 17th of May 1603 Henry wrote to Sully from Fontainebleau :

'MY FRIEND,—I feel myself so ill at ease that it would seem as though the dear God wished to dispose of me. Now, since I am obliged, when I con-

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sider the state of my health, to think of how I may assure the succession to my children, that they may reign happily, to the honour of my wife and the profit of my state, my faithful servants and my poor people, whom I love as my own children, I desire to confer with you on all these matters before making any resolutions. Set out and come to me at once, without saying anything to anyone nor giving any cause for alarm. Let it appear that you wish to go to the Church at Ablon, and, if you arrange to be met there by a relay of post-horses, you can join me here to-day.'

On reading this letter we see that Henry is unwilling to come to any decision on the most serious affairs connected with his reign, the end of which he believes to be drawing near, without first obtaining the advice of Sully. It is a question of the succession to the throne, of assuring the Queen an honourable future, of providing for his State, his servants, and his people. Sully is represented as the man whom he cannot do without. Unfortunately, it is not the letter which Sully received.

A small detail, insignificant enough at the first glance, shows us that the letter is a forgery. Henry is described as recommending Sully to send post-horses secretly to Ablon in order that he may reach Fontainebleau on the same day. Now Henry, who knew that Ablon was on the borders of his park, only a few minutes' distance from the château where he resided, could not have advised Sully to obtain post-horses for so very inconsiderable a distance. Errors such as these from time to

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time escape the forger, and betray him. The original of this letter of the 17th of May has been discovered; the following are the real terms of the letter written on that day by Henry IV.:—

‘MY COUSIN,—Since I wrote to you this morning I have been afflicted with retention of urine, and although the doctors assure me that it is nothing serious, which I hope is the case, I pray you, immediately on receipt of this, to come to me here without causing any alarm. Let it be thought that you are going to Ablon to take Holy Communion, and when you get to Juvisy, post on to me, for I wish to speak with you. I pray you let no one know of what I have written to you. Good-night, my friend.

‘Given at Fontainebleau, on Saturday, May 17th, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

‘HENRY.’

It will be seen from this letter that Henry makes no mistake about the distance between Ablon and Fontainebleau, and that it is from Juvisy that he recommends Sully to take horse; which is quite natural, for Juvisy was formerly the first posting station out of Paris. ‘I wish to speak with you . . .’ so runs the real letter. The succession to the throne, the future of the Queen, the State, his faithful servants, his people, whom he loves as his own children—all this is nothing but a vanity-stricken and childish elaboration of the simple words ‘I wish to speak with you.’

But the alterations or additions to the letters are less inoffensive when it is his aim to induce his

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readers to believe that events happened other than they actually did. M. Yung, who has made a study of Henry as a writer, finds that his letters travestied in this manner have no longer any literary interest whatever; we might add that they lose also all historic interest.

Let us take another letter of Henry's. Villeroy, the Secretary of State, was in his time antipathetic to Sully. When he again became Minister under Louis XIII. he did not find the Superintendent, then in disgrace, any more kindly disposed to his memory. In order to satisfy his hatred, Sully endeavoured to strike at Villeroy in such a way that his fame as a Minister should bear a stigma. If Sully alone were to accuse him the allegations might be doubted. Therefore he inserts a letter purporting to be from Henry, and puts the burden of vilifying Villeroy on the King himself. One of Villeroy's clerks, L'Hoste by name, had sold the royal cipher to the Spaniards. When he knew that he would be found out the faithless clerk took flight, and was drowned in attempting to swim the Marne. Sully lets the blame fall on the head of the Secretary of State, in whose employ the clerk was, and makes it appear that Henry wrote to him on the 25th of April 1604 as follows:—

'MY FRIEND,—You know (for I have already told you something of the matter) how, when I was informed that L'Hoste, clerk of the Sieur de Villeroy, had escaped, and afterwards was found drowned, I was for a long time in doubt as to what I ought to think of the affair and what I ought to

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do with Villeroy. But he has at length induced me to pity him, seeing him with tears in his eyes, sighs on his lips, sorrow in his heart and knees bent in supplication, begging for my pardon, the which I have been unable to refuse him, and I would even request you, provided he can give assurance of serving me better in future, to write to him a letter of consolation, assuring him of my continued friendship, for I know that he would receive such a letter most gladly. God be with you, my friend.

‘Given at Fontainebleau, this Tuesday evening.

‘HENRY.’

To think that Henry, who two years earlier, had, for the safety of the State, refused to pardon Biron, and sacrificed a man who had rendered him such noble service, would not only have pardoned Villeroy for selling his cipher to the enemy, but even have continued to keep him at the head of his affairs! That he should have refused to prosecute him, contenting himself with sending him into disgrace, was unlikely enough, but to have kept him in his confidence, and left the secrets of the government still in his hands, is quite incredible. Henry IV. was far too wise a statesman to commit so dangerous an act of weakness. Moreover, the style of the letter betrays the hand of the forger: ‘. . . tears in his eyes, sighs on his lips, sorrow in his heart and knees bent in supplication.’ Henry never wrote like that; he never sought for effect in his periods; it is vivacity of thought or elevation of sentiment that gives relief to his phraseology, and there is never

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any searching for words. It is, on the other hand, quite the custom of the authors of the *Economies* to produce their effects with pretentious phrases. Such phrases as they have here put in the mouth of Henry are habitual with them. They had already adopted the manner at an earlier date, when they made Madame the King's sister reproach Sully for having called to her mind that journey of the Comte de Soissons into Béarn, on which she never thinks without rancour in her heart, sighs on her lips and tears in her eyes.'

And we find a similar period in Sully's description of the scene, a very lively one according to him, which took place about December 1598, between Gabrielle d'Estrées, Henry IV., and himself, in connection with the baptism of Alexandre Monsieur. 'At which this woman,' so runs the sentence, 'having tears in her eyes, sobs on her lips and groans in her heart. . . .'

Such comparisons leave us no longer in any doubt whatever as to the inauthenticity of the letter.

M. Berger de Xivrey, who was the first to call attention, although in a tentative manner, to the calumnious nature of the letter, was not struck with such coincidences in the phraseology of all the letters: ' . . . We must not forget to take into consideration that Marbault may have been to a certain extent led away by his feelings when, in criticising the *Economies Royales* he is continually reproaching Rosny for having manufactured letters and attributing them to the King. At the same time

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it is impossible not to recognise at least alterations in a certain number of letters preserved in these celebrated memoirs. Now the odious unlikelihood of Sully's insinuations against Villeroy would seem to warrant us in suspecting a certain alteration. . . .' For our part, we confess that we are less charitable than M. Berger de Xivrey; we do not believe in alteration, but in the entire fabrication of a letter which from first to last is no less than a slander on an honest man.

Having reason to suspect him we must be wary of all letters containing compliments or extravagant praises addressed to Sully. He had a kind of mania for admiring himself and imagining that everyone else admired him too. Henry IV., a Gascon, and something of a jester, renders justice to all the world and to Sully more than anyone, but he never praises, he seldom pays compliments, and there is always reason to treat with grave mistrust a letter which breaks the royal habit. There is, moreover, a further reason for suspicion, and that is that by this method of correspondence Sully is able to give vent to his hatred for his enemies.

We would call particular attention to the maliciousness of the forged letters. The vindictive humour that urges Sully to their fabrication is a special trait of his character. He is capable of very shabby actions when he yields to this natural inclination of his. M. Berger de Xivrey, in a note to his *Lettres Missives*, speaks of the odious vengeance exercised by Sully on Cardinal d'Ossat, who so ably and successfully defended the interests

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of Henry IV. at the Court of Rome. We are indebted to Sully alone for our information. He himself, in his *Economies*, relates how, mortally offended by a certain passage in a letter of the Cardinal's in which he thinks he sees an accusation against himself, he causes payment of the Cardinal's stipend to be stopped. Prayers, entreaties, the intervention of friends—all failed to overcome Sully's vindictive obstinacy. Cardinal d'Ossat possessed neither birth nor fortune; merit alone had raised him to the post he occupied and the honours with which he was clothed. Not wishing to run the risk of lodging a direct complaint against the Superintendent with the King, he submitted to his income being reduced to the more than modest revenues of his bishopric of Rennes; and, poor in the midst of all the opulence of the Court of Rome, he was none the less a faithful servant of Henry IV., and his wise policy was crowned with complete success, but, thanks to Sully, he remained in straitened circumstances until the time of his death.

A man capable of committing such an act of injustice, and above all capable of recounting it, may deserve the admiration of posterity as a man of policy or a great statesman, but he certainly does not merit our regard. In order that we may not be charged with attacking the historian's veracity on insufficient grounds we have proceeded to the examination of other letters, and we now come to those documents that concern the memory of Gabrielle d'Estrées; we have wished in what has

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preceded to prepare the reader, that he may not be surprised with what we shall have to put before him.

III

NEGOTIATIONS RELATIVE TO THE DIVORCE OF THE KING AND QUEEN MARGARET

It suited Sully that he should appear in the eyes of posterity as having been charged by Henry to negotiate the divorce with Queen Margaret. He maintained further that the latter would not give her consent so long as she had reason to fear that the King would marry Gabrielle d'Estrées, and that she 'delayed proceedings and interposed doubts and difficulties' up to the time of Gabrielle's death. In support of this, two letters of Sully's to the Queen and three from the Queen to Sully are quoted in the *Economies*. Sully speaks further of a sixth letter, written by the King to Margaret, with the idea of 'soothing her and rendering her more tractable.' The majority of historians have not doubted the allegations of the Superintendent, and M. Guessard, under the patronage of the Society of the History of France, has published these letters as authentic. We have, however, to deal with a correspondence which owes its origin entirely to Sully's fabrications. That it may not be possible to accuse us, like Marbault, of passion and prejudice, we will not confine ourselves to generalities, but put before the reader's eyes the details of the law-

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suit, hoping thereby to remove all doubts from his mind.

Sully recounts at great length an important conversation which he had had at Rennes with the King in the early days of April 1598. The latter was even then contemplating marriage with Gabrielle d'Estrées, but he did not dare to speak of his desires openly with his Minister, fearing he would reprove him. Nevertheless, as he had definitely promised marriage to his mistress, he wished to induce Sully to express his approbation. The scene, whether true or false, seems to have been one of the most curious; it must have lasted more than three hours. The King, after having shown his need for legitimate heirs capable of succeeding to the throne, proceeded to discuss all the marriageable princesses of Europe one by one, finding objections to every one in turn. The woman whom he would marry must fulfil three conditions: she must be beautiful, of an agreeable temper, and capable of bearing him children. What he most dreaded was a vixen; it almost seemed as though this unfortunate Prince had a presentiment that he would lose Gabrielle, dear and devoted as she was, and fall after her death into the hands of Henriette d'Entragues and Marie de Médicis! Gabrielle certainly fulfilled in the eyes of the King the three conditions which he desired to find in his wife, but he did not wish to be the first to pronounce her name. The Superintendent understood his master's language perfectly, but since he was naturally very much opposed to the marriage he pretended not to

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hear. 'O the clever animal that you are!' said the King at length. 'You could know quite well if you liked, could even read my thoughts, for it is not as if you had heard no rumour of anything; but I know quite well what you mean by acting the ignorant clown in this way; you mean to make me name her myself and I will do it, for you will have to confess that all these three conditions are to be found in my mistress. But I do not mean by that that I am thinking of marrying her: only I would know what you would say if, failing others, I did one day take it into my head to do so.'

Sully at first maintained an attitude of reserve, but was urged by the King to speak freely and openly, without fear of angering him. 'Since I have chosen you,' said he, 'to be my friend, and one who will, while we are alone, always tell me the truth: you will, however, please me by undertaking never to do so before others.' Thereupon, with the most praiseworthy frankness, if the narrative be a true one, Sully put before the King all the inconveniences which such an alliance would entail: the universal blame which he would incur; the intrigues and the various pretensions of the children already born to him, where the eldest was the issue of the adultery of both parents, the youngest of the adultery of one only; and the question, supposing the King were to have other children after his marriage, as to whether these would only succeed to the throne after their elder brothers and sisters. The narrative, which is very well told up to this point, now begins to overstep the bounds of all possibility.

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Sully proceeds to remind the King that rumours are rife among the people to the effect that his children do not belong to him: 'So much so that besides the fine tales that are spread abroad, (of which you know all, especially that of Monsieur Alibour . . .) the first of your children, since you are pleased to call them by that name. . . .' It is quite impossible to believe that Sully would have used such language to Henry, and that the latter, who had so very tender a regard for his mistress and his children, would not have protested with his usual vehemence against doubts so outrageous, so false, and so brutally expressed. Not only did Henry love his children, but 'he was so blinded by his ardent affection for them,' says Richelieu, 'that he saw in them no faults and was wont to reason so illogically in any matters that concerned them that his ensuing action would often be the opposite of what it ought to have been.' L'Estoile relates that the Duchesse de Mercœur, at the time of the journey into Bretagne, 'having one day come upon His Majesty struggling to dress the hair of his little Cæsar, laughingly asked him if it were possible that so great a King could also be a good hair-dresser.' And then, too, we have the following letter, written by the King to Gabrielle from Rennes, shortly after Sully's offensive insinuations:—'My dear love, the power of my son has been established with many cheers and much clapping of hands. The councillor who drew up the report has scored a triumph, as has also the advocate who declaimed in his favour. I will tell

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you all the details; they will in no way displease you.'

We could bring forward many other proofs of the King's certainty that Gabrielle's children were also his, without having to call to mind the generous gifts lavished upon them during his lifetime. These children of his love were beautiful, gay, hardy, and affectionate; he saw himself again in them. How is it possible that he would not have defended them against Sully's maliciousness? His fatherly tenderness extended itself, moreover, to all children; witness the emotion, which brought tears to his eyes, that he felt when he received one of his rare marks of affection from the little Dauphin, a taciturn and spiteful child.

Sully, who knew his master well, would never have risked telling him that Gabrielle's children were not his, and if he had ventured upon such an imprudent statement it is certain that the King would never have received so egregious a calumny in the silent manner depicted in the *Economies*.

The interview between them lasted for a very long time, and it was arranged that the King should tell no one of his project of marrying his mistress until such time as all the formalities relative to his divorce had been settled,¹ 'for fear lest the Pope, Queen Margaret, and others who imagined they had a right to interest themselves in the matter should interfere and try to prevent the marriage.'

¹ They were all settled at this time! The whole narrative is nothing but a fabrication.

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At the end of the interview Sully asserts that it was decided that he should write to the Queen, and find out whether he could persuade her to do 'that which was necessary' for obtaining a divorce from the King.

The following are extracts from this letter, so-called, of Sully's to the Queen. We suppress the opening sentence, which is long and obscure.

'... Now, I tell you all this, Madam, my dear Queen, in order that when you think thereon you may not misunderstand my desire to see you sincerely and in all good faith reconciled one with the other, and although I see only too well that the thing of which France stands so much in need, that is, a lawful heir to the throne, can not be supplied by your coming together again, I venture to think that, with your intelligence, which I have always rated so highly, your wisdom and your good judgment, you will be well disposed towards the overtures which I am about to make with the object of bringing you together to converse amicably and equably on the subject of your consenting to live together in all confidence and sincerity as a good brother and sister should, a thing which I assure you would be very easy, if you can show me that you take my interference in good part. Awaiting the honour of your commands, I beg that the Creator may, etc. . . .

'Given at Rennes, April 13th, 1598.

'ROSNY.'

It must be confessed that this letter is remarkable neither for clearness nor for accuracy, and had the

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Queen received it she would probably have replied : 'I do not understand you. You desire that the King and I should live together as good brother and sister, and assure me that that would be quite easy. Is it of my divorce from him that you wish to speak, and in regard to which you propose I should make overtures to him? Why, that is an affair of very long standing, which was started as long ago as April 1593, and as far as I personally am concerned there has never been anything to prevent the success of the negotiations. I fail to understand how you come to be ignorant of the fact that I have furnished my procuration once already, in January 1594, and that if at that time the negotiations fell through, the fact must be attributed to the dispute with Rome, to the expulsion of the Jesuits, to the refusal of absolution to the King, and to the recent wars. The negotiations have lately been reopened with more likelihood of success. It was Erard, the master of requests for Navarre, and my council, who first made overtures to me on behalf of du Plessis-Mornay, acting under orders from the King. There is in existence a very lively correspondence, stretching over several years, between du Plessis-Mornay, the King and myself. I have even written to his mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées, with whom I am on very good terms, and to whom, naturally, the matter is also of interest. Hence your letter is inexplicable; you should know all this, and ought not to be ignorant of a single detail, not even of those events that happened before you were made Superintendent,

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when you were not present, as you now are, at all Councils of State.'

Instead of replying in this fashion the Queen kept silence for four months, and then suddenly wrote to Sully as if she had received the letter the day before. It is worthy of note that Margaret of Navarre, gay and witty as she was, adopts the style of the *Economies*, and writes vaguely and obscurely, the while she lavishes upon Sully praise and eulogy in the manner of all the forged letters.

'MY COUSIN,—I have received a letter from you which touches on several matters calling for careful consideration, upon some of which I have myself often pondered, while of others your letter has served to refresh my memory; I have indeed reason for cherishing your affectionate regard for my peace and well-being,—happiness is still unknown to me, my sojourn on this earth having been uninterruptedly sad and gloomy. But, believe me, I have received your proposals with the complacence they deserve, and care not what becomes of me so long as you succeed in achieving the end you desire, putting, as I do, so high a price on the heroic virtues of the King, and being most anxious to find myself once again in his good graces. Whatever may be necessary for me to submit to will be agreeable to me, especially as you have spoken to me in so affectionate a strain. I am so well assured of your virtue that I feel it would be impossible for me to receive from you counsel that is not honourable and helpful, nor law from so wise and generous a King as ours that is not equitable and just. Wise and affec-

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tionate as you are, I leave the conduct of the affair in your hands, awaiting the issue with impatience, just as I am impatient, too, to sign myself, cousin, your very loving and faithful cousin,

‘MARGUERITE.

‘Given at Usson, this 20th September, 1598.’

We must confess that, if the Queen was awaiting ‘with impatience’ the results of Sully’s intervention, she took a long time to write and accept his proposal—from the 13th of April to the 20th of September!

There is another letter of which Sully only gives the substance, pretending that the Queen had written to him concerning the rumour that had reached even her ears of the King’s wish to marry Gabrielle d’Estrées; ‘which you showed to the King,’ say Sully’s complacent secretaries. The letter contains many protestations of her great desire to see the King the possessor of legitimate children, and expresses her resolution to do all in her power to accelerate the dissolution of her marriage. But at the same time, if in her place were to be put a woman of such low origin as Gabrielle, a woman who had, according to report, spent her life in most vile fashion, her efforts would, she declared, be in the opposite direction, and she would refuse to transfer any portion of her due to so unworthy a recipient. ‘She begged you,’ continue the secretaries, ‘to do all in your power to prevent so great a disgrace from falling on King, herself and all France alike. . . .’

The date of this supposed letter is not given, but

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it must be taken as being later than the 20th of September, and prior to December, 1598. Sully asserts that he communicated its contents to the King, and that he told 'something' of the matter to M. de Fresne and the Chancellor de Chiverny, so that the Duchesse de Beaufort might come to hear of it. This cannot be believed, for there is no doubt that, if the King heard of the gratuitous insults contained in the Queen's letter as to Gabrielle's 'base and evil manner of living,' the harmony which is so noticeable throughout the authentic letters (not quoted by Sully) would surely not have continued.

The *Economies* return to the subject later. The secretaries maintain that the Queen, who had it in her power to expedite 'so good a work,' yet showed herself ever a most unwilling subject, declaring ('for such were her words and such the terms of the letters she wrote to you') that she would consent to nothing so long as she had reason to fear that Henry might marry 'that baggage Gabrielle—for thus in her spite did she name Madame la Duchesse de Beaufort.' The King, hoping to soothe her ruffled spirits and render her more tractable, wrote her a letter full of compliments and kind words, informing her that he would do nothing 'without first finding out what her intentions were, so that he might conform thereto.' The King further begged Sully to write to the Queen, 'in consideration of the great confidence in which she has for so long held you.' 'Your letter was as follows,' say the secretaries (we extract certain passages):—

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‘MADAM,—I am gratified to see by the reply with which Your Majesty has been pleased to honour the letter I wrote to you from the town of Rennes that my desire to render you my very humble service, and my endeavours to procure your happiness, have given rise to such trust in my honesty, faith and loyalty as may lead you of your own free will to put into my hands the safe conduct of this so eminent a business. My solicitations seem to have come at so favourable a time, and our most virtuous King seems to be so well disposed towards them, that there is nothing in any way suggested that does not have regard to your happiness . . . etc., etc.

‘Given at Paris, the 6th March 1599.’

It will be noticed that this letter has nothing in common with the narrative which comes before it in the *Economies*, in which the Queen is made to speak coarsely of Gabrielle, and to declare that she will never give her consent to a divorce if this mistress is to succeed her. Instead of replying to this, Sully addresses an obscure and meaningless letter to her, of which, in our mercy towards the reader, we have only quoted a part.

At the time when, in the *Economies*, Sully is seeking to mislead us by such documents, the negotiations with Margaret were already terminated in France. She herself, moreover, had so ardent a wish to see things brought to a conclusion at Rome that, so far from being hostile to Gabrielle, she had presented her on the 11th of November 1598, before Mathurin and Portail, notaries at

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Usson, with the duchy of Etampes. Although it had the appearance of a magnificent gift, this duchy had little real value, as it enjoyed but a very modest revenue. Gabrielle accepted the wedding present on the 4th of January 1599 in the presence of Claude de Figues and Pierre de Briquet, notaries of the King, in the Châtelet of Paris.

The procuration of January 1593, in which Queen Margaret, at the wish of the King, petitioned for her divorce, had now been for some time in abeyance. A second procuration was signed at Usson on the 3rd of February 1598, a date prior to Sully's manufactured letter of the 6th of March, and reached the Louvre on the 9th of February. The ambassador, Brulart de Sillery, had left for Rome at the end of January, bearing among other despatches a letter of an extremely urgent nature from the hand of the King to the Pope. In the light of all these events what meaning is there in the allegation made by Sully that in the following month of March the King charged him to intervene with Queen Margaret, from whom he had now no longer anything to ask? This letter is as spurious as its predecessors. But Sully does not stop here; he fabricates a fifth letter, dated from Usson on the 29th of July 1599, addressed to him by the Queen after the death of the Duchesse de Beaufort:

‘MY COUSIN,—I begin to have hopes of our affair, now that, as I learn with so much pleasure from your letters, you are taking it into your protecting hands. If I have hitherto dallied and delayed and interposed doubts and difficulties, you of all others

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must know the reason, namely, that I did not wish to see myself ousted by such a disreputable baggage, whom I deemed unworthy of taking my place. But now that, by the blessing of Heaven, circumstances are changed, and I need no longer have any doubts of the King's wisdom and prudence . . . , when I see that he assures me my titles and rank, I will agree to everything within reason. . . .'

Thus, if we are to believe Sully, the Queen promised *conditionally* in July 1599 to do what she had, already for the second time, promised to do on the 3rd of February preceding.

A glance at authentic documents will serve to complete the proof of the spurious nature of the narrative and the extracts quoted in the *Economies*. It was not Sully, as we have already seen, who opened negotiations with Queen Margaret in 1598. As far back as the beginning of 1593, in a letter from the Queen bearing the date of the month of April, we learn that it was Sieur Erard who was charged to open negotiations with her in the first instance. Margaret eagerly welcomed these overtures, and at the same time wrote to Duplessis-Mornay, begging him to use his influence with the King. 'The said Sieur Erard will communicate with you in the matter, and give you all the information you may require, and if you would so far oblige me as to take in hand the completion of what has been begun so well and on which depends my peace of mind and even the safety of my life, you would earn my undying gratitude.' We see how eagerly Margaret looked forward to the chance

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of obtaining her divorce, without concerning herself in any way as to who was to replace her. Having fulfilled his mission at Paris, Sieur Erard returned to Usson, carrying with him a letter from the King to Margaret dated September 1593.

‘MY FRIEND,—Since Sieur Erard is about to depart, my letter must be short. I can only think that by my last letter you will have seen how pleased I was to hear what he had to report concerning you; in accordance therewith I send him back to you furnished with the necessary provision, of which you spoke to him. Believe me, I beg, that I will omit nothing that I can think of as being likely to induce you to give your consent, either now or in the future.’

When the King speaks of the ‘necessary provision’ he is referring to Margaret’s personal affairs and to the ordering of her financial position. She demanded 250,000 écus wherewith to pay her debts and an annual pension of 50,000 francs; when both the present and the future were thus assured to her she handed over her estates in Picardy to Henry, and signed the first procuration in which she petitioned for her divorce.

The matter proceeded without any opposition on the part of the Queen. Sieur Erard conveyed to her the King’s promise to see to the ordering of her affairs, and received in exchange the procuration Henry had asked for. The King wrote to her on the 27th of December 1593:

‘MY FRIEND,—As soon as Sieur Erard returned and I was assured both by him and by what you your-

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self write to me of the continuance of your good will on my behalf, I hasten to send what I promised you. . . . I beg you to send me the procuration as soon as you can, when you have added thereto the words which I have charged the said Erard to demand of you,—words that are necessary to facilitate the end you desire.'

Thus by the end of the year 1593 both parties concerned were agreed on the matter. As soon as the amended procuration reached Paris, in January 1594, the King called together a commission charged with the examination of the questions raised by the divorce.

Sully at this time had nothing whatever to do with the affair. Things did not at first go altogether as Henry wished. It was first of all discussed whether the annulment of the marriage should be demanded of Rome or of the French ecclesiastical authorities. Pope Clement VIII. was favourable to the League and hostile to Henry IV., and, what is more, refused to believe in the sincerity of the abjuration made by the King at Saint-Denis in the preceding July. He had visited his discontent on the monastery of Saint-Denis for having accepted the abjuration of a turncoat who had in 1572 abandoned the Protestant religion once, only to return to it as soon as he had made good his escape from the court. Hence the Pope refused absolution to Henry, and in so doing yielded to the entreaties of the Spaniards and the chiefs of the League, who were well aware that, on the day that Henry was admitted into the pale of the

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Catholic Church, the part they were playing in France would come to an end. The Commission called together by the King declared that in their opinion it was impossible to appeal to the Pope, who would be certain to refuse to have anything to do with a petition for the dissolution of marriage presented by an excommunicated prince. It then became a matter of considering whether he should lay his case before the ordinary ecclesiastical authorities, but there again difficulties arose which Henry had failed to foresee. The Bishop of Rennes was in a false position. In consequence of his having endeavoured to treat with all parties he had rendered everyone dissatisfied—most of all did he fear a complete rupture with Rome. And it was before him that the case would have to be laid. It was suggested that the King should have recourse to his Grand Almoner, the Archbishop of Bourges, who was equally competent to act, but the Bishop of Paris refused to allow himself to be supplanted by the Archbishop of Bourges.

If Henry was eager to obtain a dissolution of his marriage, Queen Margaret, persecuted by her creditors as she was, looked upon these delays and the grave events of 1596 and 1597, which prevented the King from carrying out his engagements with regard to the liquidation of her debts, with something akin to agony. On the 9th of February 1596 she wrote to Duplessis-Mornay, complaining of her position. On the 24th of February 1597 she addressed herself to Gabrielle in most affectionate terms, begging her to act as intermediary with

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the King in the arrangement of her affairs, assuring her that her desires 'conformed entirely with the wishes of the King and her own.' 'I speak of you in the same breath,' she added, 'knowing you to be so bound together in ties of love that in conforming to the wishes of one I conform also to those of the other. . . . I speak freely to you, as to a sister, whom, after the King, I honour and esteem above everyone. . . . I have such confidence in your assurances of love for me that I wish for no other defender of my interests with the King. I should myself only weary him with my importunities on paper, but were they to come from your lovely mouth I know they could not but be well received. Greatly would you oblige me, therefore, if you would do me this service. . . .'

The genuineness of this letter is undeniable, and its existence incompatible with Sully's fictitious correspondence. As for Sully's constant habit of putting in the mouths of others attacks that he did not himself wish to formulate—notably Queen Margaret's remark that Gabrielle was of low origin, having spent her life in a base and evil manner, and being in her eyes only fit to be styled 'disreputable baggage'—to all this, this letter gives the lie direct. Not that we take the protestations of the Queen literally, or in any way believe in the sincerity of her affection for the Duchesse de Beaufort, but, confined to Usson as she was, a prey to very serious financial embarrassments, longing to return to Paris as soon as the divorce proceedings were at an end, and leave the lonely château in

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which she had dwelt for eighteen years, she had too good reason for trying to win favour with Henry's all-powerful mistress to write in so imprudent a manner to Sully. She had been a member of the Court of the Valois, which was a dangerous place even for members of the royal family, and had there learnt dissimulation, so indispensable an art to one whose youth was surrounded with Florentine intrigue and scheming.

The year 1598 brought with it the treaty of Vervins, the treaty of Angers, the Edict of Nantes, and peace throughout the realm. The King's love for Gabrielle had only grown greater during the troublous times preceding this hour of rest. He again turned his thoughts to the negotiations for divorce. In Rome the new Pope was as well disposed towards him as his predecessor had been hostile. His decision to marry Gabrielle had become public property. The Queen could no longer have any doubts, if indeed she ever had any, as to who would succeed her; and when the King addressed himself to her once more she again gave her consent, handed over the duchy of Etampes to Gabrielle, and sent the King her second procuration. What more could he want?

Fully to justify our impeachment of Sully's sincerity as a historian we would quote yet another letter, written to him by the King on the 15th of October 1598—one which is genuine. It has not been altered, and does not begin with the words 'My dear friend,' as do all those given by the Superintendent.

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'M. DE ROSNY,—I have written to M. de Silery, commanding him to hold himself in readiness for the journey to Rome which I wish him to make in regard to the dissolution of my marriage, as soon as Sieur Langloise, some time Provost of my town of Paris, returns from Usson with the necessary procuration, in accordance with the resolution of the council at which you yourself were present. This is a matter that as you know I have very much at heart, and I write to beg you to see that all is in readiness for the journey of the said Sieur de Silery, in order that he may set out immediately after the return of the said Sieur Langloise. And I have commanded M. de Villeroy to keep you informed of the progress of the affair as long as the Sieur de Villeroy is at Rome. . . . I pray God, M. de Rosny, to keep you in his good and holy custody.

'HENRY.'

In this manner, in October 1598, was Sully informed of the whole matter. He had become the chief man of the State, assisting at all the councils, and concerned in all that took place; but in order that there should be no possibility of any doubt Henry reminded him of the matter which was treated in a council at which Sully was present. His insincerity seems indeed incontestable.

We believe him to have been influenced by various feelings. In the first place, to satisfy his overweening vanity he was unwilling to be a stranger to any one of the important events of his time. He wished to be the pivot, so to speak, round which this particular event turned, just as he was of so many

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others. Henry's marriage with Gabrielle would have been a most disastrous and fatal occurrence. Had it come to pass, it is impossible to conjecture what would have happened at Henry's death. Never since the Hundred Years' War had the unity of France been threatened with so great a danger, and Sully wished to appear as having been the minister who prevented the committal of so egregious an error. It is certain that he did nothing to prevent it, and the death of Gabrielle alone frustrated the King's designs.

Sully pandered to yet another weakness in manufacturing these letters, and that was his hatred for Gabrielle. He paints us a Gabrielle who never existed, a shameless woman who deceived the King and then persuaded him that the children of her various lovers belonged to him. The Queen, according to Sully, only speaks of her with the utmost contempt, and on every possible occasion brands her with insulting epithets. Against this ugly picture we will put that made for us by a contemporary for whom we have a special predilection—d'Aubigné. He was an austere Protestant, with convictions firmly established; whether he had his sword in his hand or his pen, he was still a Protestant. Sully was before all things Secretary of State; sometimes he forgot altogether that he was a Protestant. He was besides a very able Secretary of State, and d'Aubigné would have made a very bad one. Sully resembled a cunning provincial—'Clever animal that you are!' Henry used to say to him. D'Aubigné was full of loyalty and sincerity, and his character

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was thoroughly consistent. He was a man who always wrote what he thought, even when he was treating Henry unjustly. Just as he judged the King too harshly, so was he free from any feeling of partiality towards Gabrielle. This is what he says :

‘The Duchesse de Beaufort made but a modest use of her power over the King, but not so her relations. This occasion invites us to discourse on this amour in terms of respect and decorum. It is seldom that the mistresses of our Kings fail to call down upon themselves the hatred of the great ; those who do not worship them gradually come to lose favour in the eyes of the King, while everything is done for their relations, their debts paid, their services recognised, their insults avenged. It is a marvel how this woman, whose great beauty was entirely free from sensuality, lived more like a queen than a mistress for so many years and with so few enemies. The necessities of the State alone were her enemies. . . .’

In another passage we come across the words : ‘This Duchess, by whom the King had three most charming children.’

Which of these two respected the memory of the great King the most ? Sully, who, led away by his hatred, assigns to his master the part of a half-witted dupe, or d'Aubigné, who shows Gabrielle to us in her true light, beloved, popular, of a decent modesty even in her false position, and worthy of the love that Henry bestowed on her ? It is certain that Henry would have committed a grave mistake

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in marrying her, but bitterly to be regretted was the day on which he lost this devoted woman, and replaced her by a dangerous intriguer like the Duchesse de Verneuil or a morose and evil-tempered woman like Marie de Médicis. Our commiseration for the great King is only increased by the fact that these two women conspired against his life, and that the lawful wife herself, transporting to the Louvre the familiar habits of the Médicis, allowed the conspiracy to go on, even if she did not actually lend her aid to it.

We think we have succeeded in showing that Sully manufactured the five letters relating to the divorce negotiations. It remains for us to prove that at no time during these long negotiations—that is, between 1593 and 1599—did it ever enter the Queen's mind to endeavour to prevent Henry's marriage with Gabrielle.

Mezerai says that Queen Margaret told the Pope at Rome that she would never consent to a divorce, for the reason that the King proposed to marry the Duchess. But Mezerai only borrowed his information from Sully. He did the same on many other occasions, and the confidence which he placed in the *Economies* was such that in reading him we often come across whole sentences taken straight from the diatribes of the secretaries. Are we to suppose that the Queen informed the Pope secretly that she only gave the procurations for her divorce under compulsion, and that in reality she in no way consented to them? How is it possible in this case that the Duc de Nevers, the Duc de Piney-Luxem-

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bourg, the Cardinal de Joyeuse, and above all the Cardinal d'Ossat, the first diplomatist of his time—all of whom at different stages of the negotiations represented France at Rome—failed to see that Queen Margaret was only playing with them? And finally, how are we to explain the Queen's acting against her interests in this manner, writing one thing to Rome and another to Paris?

We will leave Mezerai's opinions, which are only a reflection of Sully's, and proceed to the examination of a document recently discovered by M. Jules Loiseleur—a letter dated from Paris the 16th of April 1599, in which the Président de Vernhyes gives to the Duc de Ventadour, lieutenant-general in Languedoc, a most circumstantial account, some of the details of which are quite new, of the death of the Duchesse de Beaufort. The letter is written partly in cipher, which M. Loiseleur has very ingeniously unravelled. The following passage bears on the question with which we are now concerned:—

'The King, having made up his mind to the marriage since Shrove-Tuesday, and having given his promise thereto, charged M. de Sileri to try to gain the consent of the Pope. The Queen had revoked her first statement and now promised to agree to a divorce. Erard, a servant of the house of Navarre, went in quest of the declaration. . . .'

We will suppose that the text is correct, although the President appears inexperienced in the use of his cipher, but we must call attention in the first place to a palpable error. Before Shrove-Tuesday, which in the year 1599 fell on the 2nd of March—

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in fact, by the 9th of February—Erard had already returned from Usson, and had handed the Queen's declaration, or rather procuration, to Henry. He could not, therefore, very well be sent into Auvergne after Shrove-Tuesday to fulfil a mission which was terminated at the beginning of February.

And is there not a further error in the statement that the Queen had revoked her former statement and now promised to look favourably on the marriage?

By this 'former statement' can only be meant her refusal to consent to the divorce. If we recall all the letters of the Queen, and all the events that occurred before the death of Gabrielle, notably the gift of the duchy of Etampes on the 11th of November, it would still be difficult to discover when exactly the Queen did, even for one moment, refuse her consent. It must have been not only before the 3rd of February, the day on which she signed the second procuration, but even before the bestowal of the duchy of Etampes. But then a new difficulty arises: in the genuine letters, which are complete, and no one of which contradicts another, there is no mention of any objection or opposition on the part of the Queen. We can go further, and say that the hesitation and delay that did arise came from the King's side. In 1593 Henry, urged by his ministers to marry, took the necessary preliminary steps for obtaining a divorce. He had not as yet any idea of marrying Gabrielle, but received the portraits of the Infanta of Spain and of Marie de Médicis—a fact which he confided to

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d'Aubigné. During the next two years his desire to marry grew less as his affection for his mistress increased; in 1596 and 1597 he stopped the negotiations altogether. In 1598 and the beginning of 1599 he decided to marry Gabrielle, and negotiations were energetically resumed. While the King was vacillating in this manner, Queen Margaret, from 1593 to 1599, was constant in her desire for a divorce. When the negotiations were stopped, she declaimed against the delay, and wrote to all her friends. Her position was indeed unendurable, for she had yielded to the King all her estates in Picardy, which had brought her an income of 23,000 écus; while the King had not fulfilled any of his engagements, but had left her to the mercy of her creditors. Even Erard seems to have abandoned her, letting a whole year pass without writing to her. It was, therefore, to her great satisfaction that she witnessed the renewal of the negotiations in 1598.

Président de Vernhyes is very well informed as to Gabrielle's last moments; they form the principal subject of his letter, and all the vicissitudes of the event are known to him. But in what concerns the negotiations for divorce he says no more than that which we have quoted, that is, he practically ignores the question, as do most of his contemporaries. It is easy to understand what were the sentiments of the people on the subject: all were agreed in thinking that the Queen would never give her consent to a divorce, the consequences of which would be that she would be definitely deprived of the throne, and that she, a daughter of the Valois,

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would be replaced by a daughter of a nobleman of Picardy. The people did not know of Margaret's pecuniary difficulties, nor did they think how weary she must be of her long stay among the mountains of Auvergne, and of how hopeless she felt as to any possibility of a reconciliation with her husband. They did not look upon the dangers of the situation as she did; of the lawsuit in which Henry, now determined to marry Gabrielle, could involve her if she opposed him; of the existence probably of three children—certainly of one, born in adultery to one of her lovers, Champvallon, since her separation from the King. This suit would have caused a scandal such as she wished at all costs to avoid, and which would certainly tell against her, and have the most disastrous consequences, possibly lifelong imprisonment. With a man less merciful than Henry IV. she might even have feared death as the ultimate punishment.

In place of this gloomy and fearful future Henry from the first, in exchange for her willingness to agree to a divorce, offered to pay her debts, to make her a princely endowment, to allow her a residence in Paris, an honourable position at Court, and the title of Queen and of Duchesse de Valois. Not only did she never for one moment hesitate, but she even begged for a divorce. These details must be completely ignored if, together with her contemporaries, we wish to believe in any resistance on her part.

In short, Mezerai copied Sully; Président de Vernhyes, otherwise so exact, is in this case deceived; the account in the *Economies* is inaccu-

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rate; the documents quoted are not to be found elsewhere; their spuriousness is evident, and they are only produced for the purpose of making his readers believe that no important event of the time took place without Sully's guidance, and above all to satisfy his hatred of Gabrielle by putting in the mouth of the Queen the coarsest of insults.

IV

THE PHYSICIAN, JEHAN AILLEBOUST

IN addition to such indirect attacks as those we have just been discussing we are now to see Sully and his secretaries continuing in their task of reviling Gabrielle's memory by other means as well. They succeeded only too well in their deceitful practices, and in representing as worthy of our bitterest contempt a woman of whom it has been truly said: 'Even those who did not wish to could not help loving her. By her sweetness and charm, and her readiness to help others whenever she could, she won the hearts of all.'

Sully was among those who were indebted to her for great kindness. At the death of M. d'O, the Superintendent of Finance, Sancy and Sully both wished for the post. Gabrielle seconded Sully's candidature to the best of her ability; but Henry did not dare to confide the post to him, because he had until then had no experience whatever in finance. Nevertheless, at the instigation of his mistress, the King adopted a middle course. He

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constituted a council of finance, at the head of which he put the Duc de Nevers. Sully became one of its members. The ill-will of his new colleagues during the temporary absence of the King kept him out of it for several months; but, backed up by Gabrielle, he at length returned to the council, and in a very short time took a dominating position in it. Sully is careful to explain to us that, if the Duchess was opposed to Sancy, it was because he had let fall some rather too outspoken remarks on her past and present life, and on the birth of Cæsar, 'about which many tales were invented,' said he, 'of which that of M. d'Alibour, false as we believe it to have been, was the best.' While pretending to give no credence to this tale Sully refers to it on three different occasions. On the third occasion he recounts it, taking care to put it in the mouth of a third person, this time that of Sancy himself.

This is the tale that Sully attributes to Sancy: The King sent his chief physician (not Alibour, but a man named Jehan Ailleboust) to visit Gabrielle, who had been ill during the whole of a night. On his return the physician told the King that she had been a little hysterical, but that her illness could only end in happiness, as, in a word, she was enceinte. 'I think you must be dreaming, or not in your right senses,' said the King, 'for how can she be enceinte? I have not been near her. You are on this occasion a very bad physician, and it would seem that you have been led to this malice by one more evil than yourself.' But the doctor persisted, and 'before seven months are passed,' he

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said, 'my statement will have been verified.' The King then went to see the beautiful invalid, and told her all he had heard, 'and led her a fine life.' Cæsar came into the world at Concy-le-Château on the 7th of June 1594. In the month of July 'M. Alibour died, for want of proper care,' says Sully, 'or otherwise. . . . The King greatly regretted him, bearing him no grudge for having said openly what he thought.'

The pamphleteers also got hold of this ridiculous tale; and L'Estoile openly accuses Gabrielle of poisoning, where Sully contents himself with hints. 'On this same day [24th July 1594] the news reached Paris of the death of M. d'Alibour, the King's chief physician, whose outspokenness to His Majesty on the subject of little Cæsar, had, so it was said, cost him his life. But it was not the King who was guilty, for he was not versed in the dastardly art of poisoning, but the woman who, as all the world held, had an interest in his death. The King, notwithstanding his promise, had repeated what the physician had said, never thinking that it would cost his faithful servant his life.'

Here we have Gabrielle a murderer, and Alibour dead, for having divulged to Henry what all the Court was aware of, and what she hid from no one, for in her children lay her power.

The story of the King's chief physician, as we have it from Sully, does not bear criticism. The discovery that Gabrielle was enceinte must have taken place about December 1593, since she was brought to bed in the following June. Henry was

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quite incapable of saying that he had not been near her, for she had been his mistress probably since the time of the siege of Chartres. Nor must we forget that it was to her that the King wrote, during the year 1593, a great number of letters, sixteen of which have come down to us, all irrefutable evidence of their great intimacy.

The story of the physician Alibour, such as is given in the *chronique scandaleuse* of the time, is not the true one. It was said that an illness that had befallen the King kept him away from Gabrielle for a considerable length of time, and it was concluded that he could not be the father of Cæsar. But, thus amended, the tale is none the more likely; the illness was a real one, but it did not attack the King until after the birth of Alexandre Monsieur, Gabrielle's third child. Henry was cured of the consequences 'of his carnosity,' at Monceaux in October 1598 by 'a most successful operation' performed by the surgeon Regnault, and shortly afterwards Gabrielle became pregnant for the fourth time.

Henry's love for his children is in reality the only reply that can be made 'to these infamous libels, these works from the hand of the enemy, these writings steeped in gall.' But is it not painful to see Sully—'the great Sully'—a churlish, spiteful old man, vying with the authors of 'these writings steeped in gall,' and, old servant of Henry IV. though he was, making use of such an anecdote (culled, doubtless, from L'Estoile, to whom he often turned in his writings), and inserting it in his

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Economies in order to satisfy his ill feeling towards a woman with whom during her lifetime he had played the part of courtier, and who during the time of her short-lived power had rendered him such great service?

V

THE BAPTISM OF ALEXANDRE MONSIEUR

THE reader will remember that, at the end of the long conversation which Sully had with the King at Rennes in the year 1598, it was decided that it was necessary to keep secret the resolution to which Henry had come relative to his marriage. Sully requested above all that the Duchesse de Beaufort should not speak of her hopes to anyone, so that the rumours which were now rife among the people might cease. It was, according to him, the best means of preventing the obstacles and hindrances that Queen Margaret might otherwise put forward against the execution of their plan. But it is certain that the Duchess, and especially her entourage, thought it was to their interest to act otherwise, and they spread the rumour of the marriage far and wide in order to accustom the people to it, and perhaps bind the King more firmly to his promise.

In the meanwhile there was celebrated at Saint-Germain the baptism of Alexandre Monsieur, to whom Gabrielle had given birth on the 13th of the preceding month of April. The ceremony was celebrated with as great pomp as if it had been the

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baptism of a child of France. Sully indeed pretends that during the christening the King said to him in a low voice that his wishes had been exceeded, and that he had not authorised so very elaborate a ceremonial. But what is much more certain is that all the Court took the trouble to be present, knowing that thereby they would give satisfaction to the King and the Duchess; that the godmother was Diane de France, Duchesse d'Angoulême, to whom the King was very much attached, and the godfather the Comte de Soissons, his kinsman, and one of the most important lords of his time, who for many years had solicited the hand of the King's sister in marriage. The King wished, doubtless, to console him for the marriage between Catherine of Navarre and the Duc de Bar. As a matter of fact, we find no reference whatever anywhere but in the *Economies* to the statement that Henry considered that too great honour was done to his second son and his illustrious godparents.

According to Sully, M. de Fresne, a member of the Council of Finance, one of the Duchesse de Bar's faithful adherents, a few days after the christening, produced an order 'to pay what was necessary to the heralds, trumpets and hautboys who officiated at the baptism of Alexandre Monsieur, as at that of a child of France.' Sully was not as yet Superintendent in sole charge of the finances of the State, but the King had already resolved that no mandate should be paid without its having been first subjected to Sully's inspection. The order drawn up by M. de Fresne was therefore submitted for his sig-

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nature. As he read it he cried out that there were no children of France, and that the 'heralds, trumpets and hautboys' should be paid as for the christening of a private individual. He added that he would take the paper to the King in order to show him how ill observed on the part of the Duchess had been the secrecy which he had enjoined after their conversation at Rennes. He found Henry at the Louvre chatting with Epernon; other courtiers stood near. Having read the order Henry fell into a rage. 'The maliciousness of M. de Fresne is answerable for this, but I will be even with him. Tear up the order.' Then, turning to those who stood nearest to him: 'See how spiteful the world is and how those who serve me well and who are after my own heart are for ever being thwarted. An order has been presented to M. de Rosny, in the hope that if he signed it he would offend me; if he refused to sign it he would offend my mistress.' Henry then sent Sully away, telling him to seek out the Duchess, and endeavour to pacify her; and, added Henry, 'if you do not succeed I myself will speak to her as a master who expects to be obeyed.'

Gabrielle received Sully most ungraciously, and after a few sharp words said to him: 'I am not constituted as the King, that you can persuade me that black is white.' Sully then returned to Henry, and brought him to the Duchess in his own coach; and then took place that great scene of tears and despair, the account of which occupies so large a space in the *Economies*. The Duchess treated Sully no better than a lacquey. The King,

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seizing this opportunity to heap praise on his Minister, said to Gabrielle: 'Those of my house have not disdained an alliance with his. . . .' But, on the other hand, he had only harsh words for his mistress: 'You must know that, although I loved you better than any in the land, in that I found you gentle and gracious and sweet-tempered, never surly or morose, yet if you suddenly change in this fashion you will make me believe that your former conduct was all a pretence.' Gabrielle's despair knew no bounds; she called for a dagger, that she might pierce herself to the heart; she denounced Sully before the King as having used 'fine words at the baptism of your son and mine . . . in his endeavour to induce you to think ill of the honour done to the child. . . . What evil has he not spoken concerning your children and mine? What hopes have I to live for after such disgrace, after seeing a servant of whom so many have good cause to complain preferred to a mistress whom all the world extols?' And finally (if there is any truth in what Sully says), the King uttered those words, so terrible in the ears of Gabrielle: 'I assure you that were I reduced to the necessity of choosing between the one and the other, I could the more easily dispense with ten mistresses such as you than with one servant such as he.'

Sully's triumph was complete. During the whole of the narrative, while Gabrielle is being so very badly treated, the King is showering such fulsome praise upon his Minister that at one moment he stops to say to his mistress: 'I do not fear to say

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all this before Rosny, for I consider him to be so sensible that praise will only encourage him to do even better than hitherto.' At length the tale comes suddenly to an end: 'After much conversation, which is too lengthy to be reproduced here, a complete reconciliation was effected.'

Surely a tame ending to such an uproar! And we should like to know whether the order for the payment of the 'heralds, trumpets and hautboys' was signed after all.

We do not believe that this scene ever took place save in the imagination of Sully. It was now December of the year 1598, and everything was in preparation for Gabrielle's marriage; we know from many sources that her influence over the King had only increased with the years, and was now at its height. Dupleix has remarked, with truth, that 'The charms of this lady were so attractive and so powerful that the King's passion grew with its gratification (a thing unusual in love) and he became more and more a slave to it every day.' His affection increased with every child she bore him, and at the time which Sully has so unfortunately chosen for the above scene Gabrielle was all-powerful: she was entering upon her fourth pregnancy. Sully, who had indeed never rightly gauged the influence of the mistress, was less than ever able to do so at this period. A little time before, at the death of Saint-Luc, Grand Master of the Artillery, he had had a bitter experience: he had asked the King for the post, thinking it due to him on account of his long and devoted service and his

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incontestable ability, and he had even obtained the King's promise, when Gabrielle intervened. She had marked out this particular office for her father, a man of very doubtful merit, and one who had not been capable up to then of controlling either his wife or his daughter or the strongholds of which he had been governor. Now, if at this time Sully was unable to hold his own against the influence of Gabrielle even when asking for something that was his due, how can he hope to make us believe that at the very moment when the King had quite decided to marry Gabrielle—that is, in December 1598, he should say to her: 'I could the more easily dispense with ten mistresses such as you than with one servant such as he'?

The reason given of the quarrel is just as unlikely as the scene itself. Sully could not really for an instant have doubted that the ceremonial observed at the baptism of Alexandre Monsieur had the King's full approval. There were precedents that must have left him in no uncertainty whatever. Henry's eldest son, Cæsar, was born at Concy in 1594, at a time when the marriage of his mother with the Sieur de Liencourt had not been annulled; he was born at a time of war, and was baptised very quietly. In 1596 the situation had entirely changed. Gabrielle, the King's avowed mistress, had had her marriage annulled by the magistrate at Amiens, and was then at Rouen, residing openly with Henry in the monastery of Saint-Ouen, and visited by all the Court. Her daughter was baptised as a daughter of France.

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Claude Groulart, President of the Parliament of Normandy, has acquainted us with all the details.

'On Wednesday the 17th of November, 1596, was celebrated the baptism of the daughter to whom Madame la Marquise de Monceaux had given birth on the 2nd of the month, in the monastery of Saint-Ouen. The King had postponed the ceremony until this day; it was, as he thought, an auspicious date, inasmuch as he himself was born on the 17th of November, and it was the day on which he had won the battle of Ivry. The ceremony was grand and solemn, of a nature such as is observed at the christening of the children of France. Four canopies adorned the church. . . . After the procession of pages carrying torches, who were preceded by the guards and the drums, trumpets and violins, came the Maréchal de Matignon, carrying the candle, the Maréchal de Retz, carrying a large salt-cellar covered with a lid, d'Espernon with the basin, de Nevers with the vessel of water, de Nemours with the napkin and de Conti carrying the infant, who was clad in a long robe of silver lined with speckled ermine, with a train six ells long, borne by Mademoiselle de Guise. . . .'

Thus after the procession of pages came the 'drums, trumpets and violins'—in close resemblance to the 'heralds, trumpets and hautboys' of the christening of Alexandre Monsieur.

Two years later, in April 1598, Cæsar, who had been made legitimate, and to whom the King had presented the duchy of Vendôme, the title of which

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he had assumed but a few hours before, was affianced to the daughter of the Duc de Mercœur, Françoise de Lorraine. The celebration of the betrothal took place in the Château d'Angers. Mezerai says that 'the betrothal was celebrated with as much magnificence and pomp as if it had been the betrothal of a son of France. The Cardinal de Joyeuse performed the ceremony, and all the members of the Court, who had followed the King on his triumphal journey into Bretagne, vied with one another in their efforts to please their Sovereign and his Duchess.

What reason could Henry have had, in December 1598, on the occasion of the baptism of his second son, for wishing the proceedings to differ from those of November 1596, affecting his daughter, and of April 1598, affecting the betrothal of Cæsar?

Nothing could exceed the favour in which the Duchess was held; the King, who had decided to marry her, strove with vigour to carry out the final formalities in connection with the dissolution of his marriage with Margaret of Navarre. In the meantime both the King and his Court treated Gabrielle as a queen. Although she was not installed at the Louvre her residence communicated with the palace, and at night she occupied the Queen's bedchamber. Not long afterwards the etiquette proper to a queen began to be observed. For instance, on rising, her relations handed her her linen; when she sat down to table two archers stood behind her chair; the Princesses of Lorraine waited upon her at table, and upon occasion filled

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the office of ladies of the bedchamber. She was the intermediary for all royal favour, and boons were invariably granted at her intervention.

Is it possible that at this time, when we see the King preparing for his marriage, endeavouring to accustom the Court to look upon Gabrielle as their Queen, and taking every opportunity of adding to her popularity, Sully can persuade us to believe that he gained a triumph over the Duchess, and was the cause of her receiving ill-treatment at Henry's hands? Marbault makes the following remark on the subject: 'As for this quarrel with the Duchesse de Beaufort, it is hardly likely that Sully, who played the part of valet, and accompanied her to Clermont, dealing out blows to her coachman at her command, as he so often tells us, would have ventured on a quarrel with one who was about to become Queen, for it is certain that the King would have married her had she not, shortly afterwards, in the month of April 1599, been overtaken with death.'

From all this we can only conclude that Sully's narrative is entirely without foundation.

VI

LA VARANE'S LETTER ON THE DEATH OF GABRIELLE

THE following letter, in reference to the death of Gabrielle, has played a most important part in history; it is a letter which has for centuries been deemed worthy of credence, as being from the

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hand of an eye-witness. La Varenne, or more correctly La Varane, is supposed at the time of writing the letter to have ' . . . held the poor woman in his arms for dead, not thinking that she could live an hour.' The letter has always, down to our own day, been so well received that M. Fierville, the author of an interesting work entitled *L'Inventaire de Gabrielle d'Estrées*, wishing to whitenash the reputation of La Varane, Henry's factotum, who has, it is true, been badly enough treated in history, remarks that in his letter to Sully, La Varane gives a 'touching account of the death of the Duchess, displaying sentiments of affection in the face of one of those catastrophes that so often only freeze the zeal of a purely callous courtier.'

Marbault said long ago that the letter was not genuine; but who thought of consulting Marbault? And yet he was right: La Varane's letter will not bear any serious examination.

No one was better able than he to inform Sully of the various details connected with Gabrielle's death. We shall soon see how many errors are contained in this letter—errors which ought never to have been made by a man who had spent by the side of the Duchess the last four or five days of her life.

The following is the document so often made use of and so confidently quoted since the time of its invention by Sully:—

'MONSEIGNEUR,—Having no doubt that you are anxious to know all the particulars touching the

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death of Madame la Duchesse (and with reason, for she loved and esteemed you more than any other gentleman in France) I hasten to inform you that she parted from the King when about half way along the road from Fontainebleau to Paris, with a greater demonstration of affection and of regret than ever before, as though she knew that she was never to see him again,—so it seems to me now on looking back,—and the King bade me go with her and lead her to the house of M. Zamet; this I did, and the next day, which was a Thursday, after she had dined well and with very good appetite, for her host had set before her the most savoury and dainty viands, such as he knew to be especially to her taste (as you in your wisdom remarked, for, for my part, my knowledge is not sufficient for me to presume to judge of such matters as these), she went to hear *Tenebrae* at Petit-Saint-Anthoine, where on a certain day every year one of the most excellent concerts that one could possibly wish to hear is held, and during the concert she was seized with several attacks of giddiness, on account of which she returned earlier than was expected to the house of the said Sieur Zamet, where, while walking in the garden, she suddenly fell down in a fit;—it was feared she would be suffocated within an hour, but she recovered slightly and then, without being consulted as to her wishes, was straightway removed from her lodging and carried to the house of Madame de Sourdis, in the cloister of Saint-Germain;—her friends were compelled to move her in this way, owing to her

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having fallen into a great rage at the idea of leaving the house of Sieur Zamet; no sooner had she arrived there, than, on her being helped to bed, she was again seized with giddiness and fainting fits, so much so that I decided to tell the King of her indisposition and warn him that all the doctors were in fear for her life, especially as the danger was the greater in that she was in an advanced state of pregnancy and it was not possible to use remedies of a strength sufficient to cope with the violence of her attack;—but when I saw how altered and changed she was I deemed it not right that the King should see her thus disfigured, for fear it might disgust him for ever, in the event of her getting well again. I took the risk, as much for this reason as for the sake of sparing him the pain of seeing a being whom he loved so well suffering so terribly, and wrote to the King beseeching him on no account to come, and warning him that his presence would only add to her pains and probably bring about some unhappy accident, and in any case would lead to much gossip among the malicious and ill-disposed, — whereupon His Majesty decided to take the advice of all the most competent and trusty of his servants who were at his side when my letter arrived, and turned back again to Fontainebleau, and here was I, holding the poor woman in my arms for dead, never thinking she could live an hour in the face of the awful attacks to which she was subject. The courier, whom you will recognise, will tell you the rest, and make known to you what are the King's desires,

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which I doubt not you will carry out immediately, for I have often heard him say that he has never had a servant who has been so great a solace to him in all his afflictions and you may be sure that he has need of consolation in this case, after so great a loss.'

'I pray God, etc. . . .

Up to the present time the account given in the *Economies*, together with this letter of La Varane's, has completely misled historians as to the cause and circumstances of Gabrielle's death. Sully, for some inexplicable reason, while attributing her death to apoplexy following on convulsions, leaves one to suspect poisoning. The letter attributed to La Varane bears out the account which it was invented to confirm, but as to why Sully should suddenly determine to endeavour to deceive the public on the subject of the accouchement of 1599, about which he had full knowledge, we confess our entire inability to furnish an explanation.

In the first place, we find in the form of the letter itself, grave reasons for doubting its genuineness. With regard to the opening word 'Monseigneur,' Sully was not entitled to be addressed in that style, because he had not yet become Duke and Peer of the realm. 'Those who knew La Varane,' writes Marbault, 'will never believe that he could write in that way at such a time, knowing well that when Sully actually did become a Duke and was in the highest favour, he had reason to bear La Varane a grudge for not rendering him the respect he thought was his due.' Tallemant

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des Réaux, too, says: 'He lets himself be called Monseigneur by La Varane. The title of Monseigneur was not given at that time to a Superintendent and Sully was only that. . . . Moreover La Varane was too proud to address him in such terms.'

As for the style, we need no very great knowledge of the *Economies* to recognise Sully's hand in the letter. Although extremely long it is composed of only three sentences—one of interminable length, comprising almost the whole of the letter, and two other quite short sentences. We have examined several letters of La Varane to see if his style bears so striking a resemblance to that of Sully, and we find them distinguished by precision and conciseness.

We quote one chosen at random:

LA VARANE to DUPLESSIS-MORNAY.

'MONSIEUR,—We are about to set out on our journey into Bretagne. The King has left for Montereau and will pass by here again on Saturday, leaving on Monday for Bretagne. I am confident that he will reach Blois by the end of the month. Madame la Duchesse will write to you from Montereau and so will I. I can assure you of the friendliness of her feelings towards you. I will write from Saulmur and tell you when the King leaves.

'La Varane. Given at Paris, January 13th, 1598.'

One thing alone is enough to demonstrate the spuriousness of the letter, and that will be found towards the end of it, where La Varane is made to announce Gabrielle's death, and to implore Sully to

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go at once and endeavour to console the King; while a few lines higher he writes: 'And here was I, holding the poor woman in my arms for dead, never thinking she could live an hour.'

We can only conclude that this letter at first merely formed a part of Sully's account of the death of Gabrielle, and to make the account more striking he afterwards transformed it into a letter which he pretended had been addressed to him by La Varane.

We also find in the letter attributed to La Varane the same characteristic that is borne by all the false letters which we have already examined. They all contain complimentary remarks addressed to Sully. One might have thought that La Varane, holding the suffering Gabrielle in his arms, notwithstanding the fact that her sister Diane, Madame and Mademoiselle de Guise, Madame de Retz, the Dames de Martiques and de Mercœur, and other friends were all present, would not have been sufficiently collected to think of inserting in his long letter praises so agreeable to the ear of the Superintendent. The King's courier was waiting for the letter, but that made no difference; all the usual terms of praise are there. At the beginning of the letter he inserts a compliment in the name of the dying woman; in the middle a personal one on his own behalf; and at the end praise that had come from the mouth of the King.

We will cut the examination short in order to leave room for another kind of proof of the utter absence of genuineness—namely, errors and omis-

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sions such as a man so well informed as La Varane could never have committed.

He makes Gabrielle attend prayers at Petit-Saint-Anthoine on Maundy-Thursday. That is an error, for she attended the church on Wednesday. As a fact, Gabrielle arrived on Tuesday, supped with M. Zamet, and retired to rest in the deanery. On the next day, Wednesday, she felt indisposed during the service; but on the Thursday morning she publicly received the sacrament at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, returned home feeling very ill, went to bed, and had her first attack at about two o'clock. And at that hour on Maundy-Thursday, 8th April, when her convulsions were terrifying all who were in her presence, La Varane maintains that she was at a concert at Petit-Saint-Anthoine!

And now we come to something still more serious: it has pleased Sully, as we have remarked above, completely to ignore Gabrielle's accouchement. He only speaks of apoplexy, of convulsions, and makes no mention of the birth of a child still-born. But, if the letter were genuine it would fill in this gap that is left in the account given by Sully. La Varane, who wrote on Friday evening, after having been present during the whole of the afternoon at this terrible confinement, would surely have made it the principal subject of his letter; he would have told all that he had just seen: the efforts of the doctors, which were all in vain; the child torn from her bosom; the barbarous remedies to which recourse was made. Yet La Varane says not a word about it, and he even writes this sentence, which

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would seem to exclude all idea of a confinement: 'In that she was in an advanced state of pregnancy it was not possible to use remedies of a strength sufficient to cope with the violence of her attack.' Thus, according to him, there was apoplexy, convulsions, but no delivery. Yet Sully is deceiving us. Never would La Varane have written such lies. Sully saw, as all Paris saw, two coffins, the one for the mother and the other for the child, set out from Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois for Saint-Denis and Maubisson. Of what interest it was to Sully to pass this event over in silence we cannot say. One thing alone is certain, that in his account and in the account given in the letter the same end is pursued, that of inducing people to believe that Gabrielle was poisoned by describing her as succumbing to a strange and inexplicable disease.

Without being willing to acknowledge that the question whether Gabrielle was poisoned, or not can be decided according to the number of contemporary writers holding the one opinion or the other, it strikes us as significant that of eleven historians who wrote before Sully one alone, d'Aubigné, whose work appeared between the years 1616 and 1620, leaves us to suppose that there may have been some possibility of poison. The others say nothing whatever about it. Président de Vernhyes in a letter written on the 16th of April 1599 does not even take the trouble to contradict a rumour very commonly believed among the people, and probably among the old Leaguers, in which Henry was accused of poisoning his mistress.

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From the time of the publication of the *Economies* of Sully in 1638 La Varane's letter seems to have changed the opinion of historians, and Mezerai is the first of an interminable list of authors, which closes with Sismondi and Michelet, who are all of opinion that Gabrielle was poisoned by a lemon that she had eaten at Zamet's table.

Such has been the deplorable result of the lies of the Superintendent and the fabrication of the celebrated letter of La Varane.

VII

LA 'ROUSSE'

THERE is mention in the *Economies* of two women of Gabrielle's household, one answering to the name of Gratienne, and the other to the nickname of La Rousse. The former, after the death of her mistress, informed Sully that the Duchess had a passionate desire to see into the future. She interrogated all who professed to be able to discern the unknown, and had always a good number of such fortune-tellers about her. What they told her was not, however, of a nature calculated to encourage her, for none gave her reason to hope for the realisation of her ambitions. 'All were agreed in saying that they saw no marks or signs, either in her nativity, or in the lines of her palm, to show that she was destined to wield a sceptre or wear a royal crown, or even the children who came after her; and this afflicted her to such a degree that,

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according to a certain Gratiennne who waited on her, she did nothing but weep and sigh the whole night through.' She was at this time already carrying her fourth child.

The other woman, La Rousse, so called because of the colour of her hair, plays a more important part than Gratiennne. La Rousse and her husband had served the Duchess for a long time, and after her death they remained shut up in the Bastille 'for having spoken too freely of the latter's life and conduct.' The secretaries say that Sully had always kept secret the information which the married pair had given him when they came to see him after being set at liberty, but when they, the secretaries, chose to listen to them they heard some fine tales about the Duchess; 'albeit our respect for this lady, her children and her kinsmen, the memory of the love the King had borne her, and the animosity which this Rousse and her husband felt towards her, which renders most of their remarks very suspicious, imposes silence upon us. . . .'

The remarks made by this woman have garished the tales of many a dabbler in scandal. In the *Amours du Grand Alcandre* she goes by the same name; others call her Arphure. We have chosen to substitute for these tales, all of which lack accuracy, and have been amplified at will, certain information which is less romantic, less amusing perhaps, but of a more reliable nature. We have consulted the inventory of Gabrielle's furniture. We know that in order to proceed with

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this inventory, the civil-lieutenant, François Miron, who had been charged with the commission in a letter from the King dated the 15th of April 1599 from Fontainebleau, presented himself at the house of the Duchesse de Beaufort situated in the Rue Fromenteau. This residence communicated with the Louvre by means of the outhouses, and occupied practically the whole of the site of the Square du Carrousel of to-day. François Miron assembled the whole staff of servants belonging to the household of the Duchess, and made them each take the customary oath. First Louis de Valois, 'maître d'hôtel'; then Charles Lesueur, secretary and treasurer to the Duchess; then her almoner, Jacques Morel; and finally her cook and butler. Of the women, the first to present herself was Marie Hermant, wife of Sieur de Mayneville, captain of the King's guard, who had under her Nicole Guyart, lady's-maid, and Gratiennne Mareil, chamber-maid. It is of this latter that Sully speaks: 'A certain Gratiennne who was in her service. . . .' La Rousse must, therefore, be either the Dame de Mayneville or Nicole Guyart. We would observe, in the first place, that La Rousse was a confidential servant, who played an important part in Gabrielle's household, and that she was married. We are thus led to infer that La Rousse was the nickname of the Demoiselle de Mayneville, and that her husband was told off to watch over Gabrielle's safety, and later to command the archers that rendered her royal honours.

There is a second document in the shape of a letter from Président de Vernhyes, that at any rate

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partly confirms our supposition. This magistrate gives an account to the Duc de Ventadour of Gabrielle's death in the first place, and then of the incidents of the seven days following her death. In it we read that the King retained in his own household the Sieur de Valois, secretary to the deceased, and several others of her servants, but dismissed La Mayneville and her husband.

It is a fact that La Rousse and her husband were dismissed, and that shortly after they suffered many other tribulations. The letter of Président de Vernhyes was, as we already know, in cipher, but very badly written in several places, and difficult to read on that account. The passage we are about to quote is one of the most obscure.

'Her end showed how mankind is ever the sport of fortune. Even such a death had a mistress of the Emperor Charlemagne, of whom the poet Petrarch sang, and who certainly merited his praise, inasmuch as the wrath and indignation that was conceived against her way of living and the manner of her death was, as I think, born of false rumour and reports. Diabolo! To have had rings which were missing even before her death. . . .'

The latter part of this passage evidently has reference to jewels which were given to Gabrielle by the King, and which after her death could not be found.

L'Estoile, too, alludes to the disappearance of certain rings during the last agony of the Duchess.

'The day before her death, Madame de Martiques,

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who was of great assistance to her, and offered up prayers for her recovery to all the saints in the calendar that she could think of, must at the same time have drawn the beautiful rings from her fingers so skilfully that she succeeded in hiding them in her rosary. She was, however, detected by a nun who had glided into the room and was forced to give them up, because, as she was told, account would have to be made of them to the King.'

It is true that the temptation to which the ladies who assisted Gabrielle in her last moments were submitted was very great. Not until the end of April was an inventory made of the furniture and jewels in the deanery of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, in the house of Madame de Sourdis, and in the hotel in Rue Fromenteau; they were estimated at 37,738 écus. How rich a harvest was thus abandoned to their covetousness from the moment at which the life of the Duchess was despaired of until the arrival of François Miron! La Mayneville, who had for so long been in the confidence of her mistress, was naturally held responsible for this precious store.

We have seen that the theft was affirmed by the Président de Vernhyes, and he was more likely than anyone else to be well informed on such a matter; for he was a member of the Council of Navarre, and was chosen by the King to sit, together with Président Forget, on a commission for the purpose of coming to an agreement with the creditors. That theft had taken place seems certain, and La

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Mayneville evidently found it necessary to endeavour to exculpate herself. She, doubtless, defended herself by accusing Gabrielle of herself having disposed of several of her jewels; but her defence did not satisfy the King, and she was shut up, together with her husband, in the Bastille, where, as Sully informs us, they remained for six years. It must not be forgotten that the Superintendent became Governor of the Bastille in 1601, and thus had them under his charge. Their imprisonment is in the *Economies* attributed solely to the bitter things spoken by them concerning the life and conduct of their old mistress. But these things, damning as we know them to have been, were certainly not the true cause of their long imprisonment. Gabrielle was soon forgotten by everyone, and Sully least of all was likely to keep them in prison out of respect for her memory. The secretaries relate that when at length La Rousse and her husband did come to see the Superintendent, the two spoke very bitterly against the Duchess. The secretaries even refuse to repeat what they said. But by so speaking they surely ran a risk of again being incarcerated, especially as they were now speaking to the Governor of the Bastille. Surely it is more natural to suppose that it was the theft of the jewels that led to their imprisonment.

These details concerning La Rousse and her husband afford a very fair illustration of the tales that were spread about concerning Gabrielle—the tales of servants who had been dismissed and, what

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is worse, imprisoned for thefts that they had perhaps never committed.

We cannot imagine how Sully could dare to allude to them, how he could think of giving a historic tone to accusations from the mouth of two people so little deserving of trust. And when he had once spoken of the accusations, why did he not repeat them openly, in order to give them a chance of being refuted, as they certainly would easily have been? The remarks of the de Mayneville couple assume a special gravity and significance in that Sully's secretaries refuse to repeat them.

' . . . It was a source of great delight to Dame de Mayneville to find anyone willing to listen to her, but our respect for Gabrielle D'Estrées, her children and her kinsmen, the memory of the love the King had borne her and the animosity this Rousse and her husband felt towards her, which renders most of their remarks very suspicious, imposes silence upon us. . . . '

Moreover, a time came when everything was forgiven the de Maynevilles. The husband re-entered the King's guard, for we find his name and rank mentioned in the diary of the physician Erouard on the 25th of June 1605: 'The dauphin is amusing himself by the window of the passage by beating the drum of Sieur de Mayneville, captain of the guard.'

In spite of the discretion of the secretaries the tales of La Rousse and her husband concerning Gabrielle are not completely unknown, for most of them are to be found, doubtless embellished, in

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Dreux du Radier, in the *Nouveaux Mémoires de Bassompierre* and in other productions of the same value.

It is inexplicable how, since Gabrielle's death, so much credence has been given to tales of such suspicious origin. The present proprietor of the château of Cœuvres and part of the estate of the ancient duchy of Estrées has told us that not so very long ago there was destroyed an old inscription placed over one of the doors at Cœuvres perpetuating one of the most widespread anecdotes, that of Henry IV. arriving unexpectedly at the moment when Gabrielle was about to sit down to a *tête-à-tête* supper with Bellegarde, and of the latter hiding himself under the bed. The King is supposed to have taken his place at the table, and during the repast to have handed a wing of a partridge to the abashed lover, saying the while: 'Live and let live.' We know nowadays how much credence is to be attached to this *bon mot*, which was told, thirty years before the Béarnais was born, of Francis I. when he discovered Brissac under the bed of Diane de Poitiers.

A mural inscription perpetuating such an event in the very château of the Estrées! Truly a fine example of the way in which the history of the most sympathetic of the mistresses of Henry IV. has been written.

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VIII

CONCLUSION

It is not without regret that we have been compelled to surrender our illusions with regard to Sully. The studies of our youth left us the memory of an honourable and upright figure. We find ourselves to-day face to face with a very different character.

We have endeavoured to show that the Superintendent shrinks from nothing when his pride or his hate is to be satisfied. Events must bow before his passion; when the need arises he re-makes history rather than that it should not suit his purpose. To alter the text of a letter is to him no more than a game; on occasion he can invent a whole correspondence! According to him he did everything and directed everything with his own hands in the reign of Henry IV.,—the King never came to a decision on any matter without first consulting him. In one famous passage he endeavours to induce posterity to believe that Henry IV. even preferred him to Gabrielle, and declared that he would sacrifice ten such mistresses rather than deprive himself of one servant such as he! Not only did he, through the mouth of the Queen, grievously insult this mistress, who was always so gentle and so kind to him, but he would have us believe that after her death a lady's maid, suspected of theft, related concerning her past life so many

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and such scandalous tales that out of respect for the King and his children he refrains from repeating them. He leaves us to believe that Gabrielle died of poison, although he knows very well she did not, and invents a letter which he attributes to La Varane in order to give a firmer basis to his insinuations. Finally, when we think of the predictions made by him to his wife as to Gabrielle's marriage it is easy to believe that he was himself no stranger to the crime that, according to him, prevented the King from committing the grievous error of marrying his mistress.

While Sully's image loses much of its brightness in the light of these revelations it seems to us that on the other hand that of Gabrielle shines all the clearer.

DEATH OF GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES

I

PREPARATIONS FOR THE MARRIAGE

THANKS to the treaties of Angers and Vervins, France after ten years of civil and foreign war now saw an era of prosperity and peace unfolding itself. Henry had had carved on the frieze of the gallery overlooking the water at the Louvre two sceptres, the one of France and the other of Navarre, crossed and bound to the hilt of a sword, with the proud device: 'Duo protegit unus.' It was, in fact, on this good sword that all relied; it was thanks to it that the people rejoiced once more, and that the Court was even now celebrating by festivities and marriage feasts the submission of the last of the Leaguers and the peace with Spain.

Since the time when, through the intervention of Gabrielle d'Estrées, the Duc de Mayenne had succeeded in making peace with Henry on very advantageous terms, his behaviour had been that of a loyal servant to his King. The Princesses of his house on their side professed their entire devotion to the favourite, and openly approved of her ap-

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proaching marriage with the King. In the meantime Mayenne married his daughter Catherine de Lorraine to Charles de Nevers, and his son Henry to Henriette de Nevers. On the occasion of the latter marriage Gabrielle obtained for Henry de Lorraine from the King the erection to a duchy of the estate of Aiguillon. At the same time the King's only sister, Madame Catherine, married another prince of the same house, the Duc de Bar. Two alliances with the Nevers, a royalist family, and one with a princess of the blood who had remained a Protestant, were sufficient indication on the part of the Lorraines that they had renounced their former ambitions.

Finally Henri, Duc de Montpensier, married Henriette-Catherine, only daughter of the Duc de Joyeuse. And thus was the League brought to an end by marrying and giving in marriage.

Henry hoped very soon to effect a union with Gabrielle, feeling more than ever the need of legitimate heirs to the Crown.

All was at length ready for the marriage that had been so many times delayed. Gabrielle had throughout followed the end she had in view, never allowing her purpose to be turned aside by any of the difficulties that arose. From as early as 1593 she had persistently urged the King to become converted, knowing well that, while a simple bishop could annul her marriage, the Pope alone was capable of annulling that of the King.

In 1594 she had obtained from the magistracy of Amiens a divorce from d'Amerval de Liencourt.

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Since the time of the King's conversion she had always been careful to see that he should reap the full benefit of it at the hands of the clergy and of Rome. She took care, too, that he should at all times bear himself like a good Catholic.

She had made friends with the old friends of the League, and had been the chief instrument in all their negotiations for peace. When once the King had become converted, and had obtained absolution from Rome, she set herself to work to bring about the submission of the last Catholic chief still in arms, the Duc de Mercœur, and she affianced her son Cæsar to his daughter Françoise.

But while she was thus casting in her lot with the old Catholic party she was no less careful to afford help to the Protestants. She was their trusted agent in all their business with the King. In 1594, in an assembly of those of the reformed faith at Sainte-Foy, they felt such confidence in her that they opened the proceedings with the decision that a pension of 10,000 francs should be settled on this 'friend of the King who was at heart a Protestant.'

The King wished to help Gabrielle as much as he could in her well-directed efforts to become popular with the people of France, and he made her the intermediary whenever he had any favours to bestow. It was to her that thanks were due in every case. All acknowledged that her kindness was inexhaustible. So good, so obliging, so amiable was she that 'one could not help loving her.'

She brought reconciliation wherever she went.

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The Catholics were certain of her support; the Jesuits, persecuted by the Parliament of Paris, knew that she was not hostile to them; and the Protestants relied upon her help. The politicians and the parliamentarians were at this time the only parties she had to fear in reference to the end she had in view. They were opposed to her marriage and fearful of its consequences, on account of the stigma attached to the birth of her children, which would, they thought, be a never-ending source of strife and a danger to the public peace. In order to disarm their opposition she endeavoured to establish friendly relations with Groulart, President of the Parliament of Normandy, one of the most influential heads of the political party, and she invited him to her château of Monceaux. Henry, her support in all her diplomatic endeavours, took this magistrate into his confidence concerning his projects. 'I wish to refresh the race of princes of the blood' said he, 'with a stronger and more vigorous stock'—alluding to his two sons, Cæsar and Alexander.

Gabrielle sought for support throughout the realm. At five years of age Cæsar was Governor of Bretagne, and she herself held this province, with the help of lieutenants commanding in her son's name. The King had also given to Cæsar La Fère and Laon; the rest of Picardy was in the hands of Gabrielle's relations. She worked hard to extend her influence wherever she could, with such good result that 'in a very short time there were to be found in the different provinces many people,

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of high rank and noble birth, established there for this very purpose.'¹

In the light of such perseverance and such talent for diplomacy we can hardly agree with Sully when in his spitefulness he wrote thirty years later that she acted solely 'on the suggestion of her relations, who were full of vanity and ambition; for her own part she was neither high-minded nor quick-witted enough to presume so much on her own powers.'

In reality she was capable of winning to her side devoted partisans from all ranks. It was said openly that no reigning family in Europe contained a more beautiful princess—the sight of her alone seduced all hearts; and a woman so fertile—she was at this time enceinte for the fourth time; and the mother of such lovely children. She reigned by the charm of her manner and her amiability. Mounted on the throne, she would have delighted people and princes alike.

On his side Henry had long been engaged in negotiations for the annulment of his marriage with Marguerite de Valois. As soon as he had finally decided to marry Gabrielle—that is to say, in 1598—these negotiations were resumed. The parties were agreed as to the financial arrangements relative to the Queen and the position she should hold at Court in the event of her return. Marguerite de Valois had lately, from her château of Usson, sent her procuration, duly drawn up, for the laying of the divorce proceedings before the Pope; it

¹ Chiverny : 'Mémoires.'

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had reached the Louvre on the 9th of February 1599.

Some few days before the celebration of his sister's marriage the King had despatched Président Brulart de Sillery to the Holy See as extraordinary ambassador. He had full instructions as to how he should proceed, and carried letters for the Pope, one of which was in the King's own hand, dated the 20th of January.

'Most Holy Father,' wrote Henry, 'this letter is not only written in my own hand, but proceeds straight from my heart. I would bring to your notice a special fact that will also be laid before you by the Sieur de Sillery, which is of greater import to my person and my country than anything that has occurred since it pleased Your Holiness to receive me into your good grace and grant me your holy blessing; I beseech Your Holiness with the greatest possible earnestness, to grant me the mercy I would ask of you. I would esteem it no less than if you were to grant me my life anew, so great is my desire to gain consolation at your hands. I promise Your Holiness to use such consolation so that God may thereby be glorified to the aggrandisement of His most holy Church and that Your Holiness may win from me and mine such feelings of gratitude that I shall for ever bless those whom you love as tenderly as I bless those who touch me more nearly. . . .

'Your devoted son,

'HENRY.'

Sillery was bidden, in the first place, to order the

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affair of the marquisate of Saluces with the Duke of Savoy through the medium of the Pope, and subsequently to obtain the dissolution of the King's marriage in order that he might effect the marriage with Gabrielle, which he had so much at heart. At Rome he would meet with d'Ossat and the Cardinal de Joyeuse, both of whom had orders to help him in his mission.

Gabrielle had in her turn neglected nothing that might be of use in bringing to a happy issue Sillery's embassy, of which the success was so definitely to decide her fate. At the beginning of the year 1597, she had decided, if it were necessary, to sacrifice the marquisate of Saluces to the Duke of Savoy, with whom she had exchanged promises of mutual service, provided this Prince undertook to give her his support.

The representative at Paris of the Grand Duke of Tuscany had written to his master that the Duke of Savoy was on terms of agreement with Madame de Monceaux, and that he ought to induce the King of Spain to join with him in his endeavours to obtain the dissolution of the marriage. In return, Saluces was to be left to the Duke. 'It is very likely,' added he, 'that the Spaniards will favour these negotiations, seeing that one result of them will be to keep Saluces out of the hands of the French.'

While waiting for news from Rome, Henry, on Shrove Tuesday, the 2nd of March, in the midst of the rejoicings proper to the day, fixed the date of his marriage with Gabrielle for about the first

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Sunday after Easter. Sillery had been away more than a month, and after another month and a half it was reasonable to hope that the expected answer would arrive. Gabrielle counted on Sillery's using every means in his power ; she had assured herself of his devotion to her cause by secretly promising him the office of Keeper of the Seals on his return. She had in doing this perhaps a little too soon forgotten Chiverny's devoted services ; but her excuse was that the King, ill content with the Chancellor, wished to replace him with Bellièvre, and that she was weary of her incessant efforts to keep him in his office. Moreover, the feebleness of the health of this old servant warned her that the end could not be far off. In any case Gabrielle, usually so careful and so prudent, seems on this occasion to have abandoned her usual course. The hope of soon realising her marriage, the date of which was already fixed, must have induced her to sacrifice the political interests of the King to those of the Duke of Savoy, and to promise the seals to Sillery at the expense of one of Henry's faithful friends.

All was ready at Paris for the celebration of the marriage as soon as it was announced that the Pope had granted a divorce to the King. The wedding dress was made. A magnificent suite of furniture, upholstered in crimson velvet, which had been ordered, was now ready, and had been deposited in the deanery of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois with Madame de Sourdis. Gabrielle, it is true, already inhabited the Queen's chamber, but she quitted it

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whenever the King was absent from the Louvre ; it was an honour that she usurped only occasionally. Considerable scandal was, moreover, caused at the Court by her doing so. But in a few days, with head erect, and bearing herself proudly in the exercise of rights that would then be due to her as lawful spouse of the King, she intended to have the furniture, with its upholstery of crimson (a colour reserved for royalty), conveyed to this chamber, which would then indeed be her own.

The King had lately presented her with gifts in honour of their betrothal. On Shrove Tuesday when he fixed the day of the marriage, he had placed upon her finger the ring with which he had himself wed France on the day of his coronation. This ring was set with a fine table diamond. On the same day he also gave her two other presents, both of which had been given him by two of his loyal towns : a statue of a king, with a lion at his feet, in gold, presented by the town of Lyons, the whole weighing five marks five ounces, and a silver box containing a unique piece of amber, weighing four pounds four ounces, the gift of the town of Bordeaux.

Lent arrived, and each day they hoped to receive the letter from the Pope. The King, in consideration of his marriage, took certain political measures which he thought were necessary. His mind was often occupied with thoughts of his approaching end, and he was subject to painful attacks of brooding, which caused him whole days of melancholy. He contemplated quite calmly the conse-

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quences of his death and Gabrielle's position if she were called upon to be regent of the realm. To meet this eventuality he decided to furnish her with the support of a powerful man, one who was still young, and who would uphold her in the face of the ambition of the princes of the blood. He cast eyes on Biron, and came secretly to a satisfactory understanding with him, promising him the Constable's sword at the death of his friend Montmorency, now an old man. In the meantime he decided to attach him to the person of the future Queen by marrying him to her younger sister, Françoise d'Estrées. The birth of this sister had taken place at the time when Antoine d'Estrées was no longer living with his wife, and had been separated from her for six years; she passed for the daughter of the Marquis d'Alègre, the last lover Madame d'Estrées had, but it was understood that, for the purposes of this marriage, Antoine d'Estrées would formally recognise her as his daughter. She was scarcely fifteen at the time. The marriage was agreed upon, and the King handed over to Biron, in exchange for his loyal support, the counties of Bigorre and Périgord—and large sums of money.

Biron, brother-in-law to the Queen, and future Constable, now became the most important personage in the kingdom. He needed a lieutenant. Annibal d'Estrées, Gabrielle's brother, nominated Bishop of Noyon in 1594, had at the death of his elder brother left the Church and taken to the sword. He already showed signs of that intelligence and energy that won for him during his long life so

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many posts of honour, and enabled him to make his house so magnificent and so powerful. The King decided to marry him to the haughty Mademoiselle de Guise, who accepted an alliance whereby she became sister-in-law to the Queen. The Lorraines, all of whom owed a debt of gratitude to Gabrielle, gave their approval to this union, and offered their swords, if they were needed, to secure the succession of the children of Gabrielle to the throne.

There was at the Court a young prince, not eleven years old, whom Henry had educated in the Catholic religion as his heir. We refer to the Prince de Condé, who, together with his son, was destined during the century that was just beginning to play a most important part in France. But in 1599, forgotten and neglected, his precocious intelligence already taught him how dangerous Gabrielle's children were to him, and when he grew to be a man he could never bring himself to forgive them. The King intended him for the Church, where he might hope one day to become Cardinal, like his uncles of Bourbon. In the meantime, to deceive his mother, who had great hopes for him, a marriage was arranged between him and Mademoiselle de Mercœur, the betrothed wife of Cæsar de Vendôme. As the maiden was only five years old such a union could easily be projected provisionally. Cæsar, when he became heir to the throne, would renounce the alliance agreed upon at Angers in the preceding year, and would marry the daughter of the Duke of Savoy.

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In the preceding month of December, at the time of the baptism of Alexandre Monsieur, Gabrielle had been fortunate enough to win the approbation of the Duchesse d'Angoulême as to her marriage. This was a great victory, for the Duchesse d'Angoulême was a high-minded woman, of great intelligence, and one in whom Henry had such confidence that he entrusted her with the government of Limousin.

The Princesse de Conti had been approached, and she too had promised her co-operation. The Lorraine princesses now never left Gabrielle's side; it was their pleasure to dress her and arrange her hair with their own hands. When she rose and when she retired to rest her friends and relations handed her her linen, until such time as it came to be the duty of the duchesses, whom as yet she did not dare to invite to attend upon her. Henry presented to her the ambassadors and all important personages who came to the Court. When she went out, close to her litter or her coach walked a captain of the guard. After the ceremony at Nôtre-Dame she would come back to the Louvre the lawful Queen, but in her mode of living there was little that would need to be changed.

By Lent the final arrangements were completed. A few days more and the race of the Vendômes would become a race of kings;—Biron would never have intrigued; we should never have known Marie de Médicis nor Louis XIII. nor the wretched favourites of both the mother and the son; feudalism would not have been crushed under foot by

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Richelieu ; Louis XIV. would not have wasted the fruitful soil of ancient Gaul ; Louis XV. would not have effected the ruin of his kingdom. What, we wonder, would have become of France ?

II

FLORENCE, VENICE, AND ROME

WHILE the King at Paris was impatiently awaiting the news of the Pope's decision, the latter was but little disposed to satisfy him. Three courts, those of Florence, Venice, and Rome, had for many years worked for the same end—namely, that of preventing the union of the King with Gabrielle d'Estrées, and persuading him to marry the Princesse Marie, niece of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. The letters of their ambassadors leave us in no doubt whatever as to their hopes, and the base means whereby they endeavoured to realise them.

From the time when Henry IV. entered his capital the Grand Duke kept an agent at Paris, Canon Francesco Bonciani. At first he acted as secret agent for his master, pretending, in his capacity as clerk, to be one of the house of the Cardinal de Gondi, but later he assumed the title of agent for Tuscany. By his letters, which begin on the 2nd of October 1594 and end abruptly on the 2nd of December 1598, a few weeks before Gabrielle's death, we see that he had one task, and one only—that of negotiating the marriage of the Princess of Tuscany with the King.

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For a long time Bonciani could write of nothing but the King's great love for his mistress. In a letter dated the 29th of March 1596 he writes that the influence of Madame de Monceaux was increasing every day: 'Now that he who was her husband [Liencourt] is dead, there is reason to fear that *something inconvenient* may take place if the King can free himself from the Queen of Navarre.' On the 18th of December Bonciani's anxieties are set at rest. 'The King,' says he, 'speaks no more of annulling his marriage; whereas his liaison with Madame de Monceaux is creating a scandal. He thinks no longer of marrying again and is lavishing honours on the young Prince de Condé, treating him as his successor.' But very soon, by the end of the year, the States held at Rouen, Gabrielle's second confinement, the unusual honours paid to her, the magnificent ceremony of the christening of the daughter whom she had presented to the King—all combined to revive Bonciani's earlier fears: 'A grander christening could not have been accorded to an heir to the crown; . . . the King's love for his mistress grows greater; it will become an incurable evil if God *no ci mette la sua sancta mano*.' As for the Cardinal de Gondi, who, though he had become the Bishop of Paris, had remained faithful to the Grand Duke, he excuses himself to his old master through Bonciani for having figured at the baptism of a daughter of Madame de Monceaux: 'He could not refuse to give the sacrament.'

The taking of Amiens by the Spaniards in the

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following year seems for a moment to have cooled Bonciani's ardour for an alliance with Henry IV. It was Gabrielle who had furnished the King with the 4000 écus which enabled him to leave Paris—he was in great financial difficulties at the time.

On the 9th of April 1597 Bonciani writes that the King was in great need of help, which it would be right to send him were it not for the fact that no reliance could be placed on his life, nor on his succession, and that the only guarantee he could make would be his people's affection for him.

On the 28th of April an important interview took place between the legate and the Cardinal de Gondi, of which Bonciani renders an account to the Grand Duke. The legate desired the marriage of the Princess with the King; but he speaks of it as *di cosa difficilissima*—in the first place, because the Queen of Navarre was still living, but more particularly because of the King's great love for Madame de Monceaux, which would prevent him from consenting to marry the Princess. Nevertheless, the legate was of opinion that it were best to be prepared for any eventuality.

The siege of Amiens absorbed the Court during the greater part of the year 1597. But no sooner was Amiens retaken than, in a despatch of the 23rd of October, the question of the marriage was again broached. Bonciani announced that the Duc de Lorraine was seeking an alliance for his son both with the Princesse Marie and with Madame the King's sister, but Madame, he added, still hoped to marry the Comte de Soissons. The advice of the

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legate, transmitted by Bonciani, was that if the King were less tightly bound to Madame de Monceaux, it might be possible to obtain from the Pope the dissolution of his Majesty's marriage, and a termination to the affair of the Château d'If, by arranging for him a marriage with the niece of the Grand Duke.

The time was spent in conversations between the legate, the Cardinal de Gondi, Bonciani, and the ambassador of Venice—all of whom hoped to see Gabrielle lose favour with the King.

On the 14th of March 1598 Bonciani loses patience, and asks whether his master cannot induce the Pope to interfere, and put a stop to the detestable life which the King is living with Madame de Monceaux in sight of all the world, adding that it would cause a grievous scandal were the King to take her to wife.

The following month Gabrielle is at Nantes with the King. Mercœur has made his peace; *questo e bene vero che Madama di Monceaux e piu in grazia che mai!* . . . says Bonciani disconsolately.

The Grand Duke himself seems by this time to have renounced the marriage with his niece, for his agent both in May and June is obliged to revive his wishes in this respect, and entertains him from time to time with an account of the Peace of Vervins, of the power and influence of the King in Europe, and of the importance of an alliance with him, seeing how useful he would be in protecting Tuscany were the Spaniards to attack that country.

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On the 20th of June 1598 Bonciani writes that the Pope would be willing to further a second marriage on the King's part, and that, were it not for Madame de Monceaux, before four months were passed they might treat of a marriage with the niece of the Grand Duke.

On the 27th of September he tells the Grand Duke that he has entered upon secret negotiations with Villeroy in respect of this marriage.

Bonciani's last letter is dated the 2nd of December 1598, and in it he expresses alarm at the consequences likely to arise from the marriage of the King and Gabrielle d'Estrées, which now seemed imminent.

Thus the King at Paris, in preparing for his marriage with Gabrielle while awaiting the reply from Rome, was feeding on vain hopes. He was struggling against opposition, the origin of which he never suspected. From the beginning the Cardinal de Gondî, Bishop of Paris, who was in league with the Grand Duke, had openly refused to annul his marriage with Queen Margaret, on the pretext *che questo fatto tocca al Papa che diede la dispensa*. At Rome the Pope, in accord with de Gondî, with Florence, and with Venice, was quietly waiting until Gabrielle should no longer be an obstacle to the Grand Duke's project before he 'unmarried' the King.

The feelings of Francesco Contarini, the ambassador of Venice, on this question, were naturally less ardent than those of Bonciani, but he was, notwithstanding, devoted to the cause of Princesse

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Marie. He frequently saw the Cardinal de Gondi on the subject, and kept the Republic informed of every phase of the negotiations. In December 1598 the ambassador considered that the King's marriage with Gabrielle was inevitable, and that its realisation would be a death-blow to all the hopes that were built upon a union of the King with a Catholic princess like the Grand Duke's great-niece.

In the meantime Rome had not yielded.

III

ILLNESS AND DEATH

AGAINST the date of the 31st of January 1599, L'Estoile wrote in his journal: 'On this day, the last of the month, when all the world was talking of the marriage of Madame and of a more important marriage still, that of Madame la Duchesse and the King (which was a source of anxiety to so many), a Piedmontese named Bizacasser, who was seldom at fault in his predictions, said to an old friend (who repeated it to me the next day) that he was willing to stake his life that this marriage would never take place and, what was more, that the Duchesse would never again see Easter Day. . . .'

Sully quotes similar predictions in his *Economies*, but they are less definite than that given by L'Estoile. The Duchess was in the habit of consulting all manner of soothsayers, but their statements, according to Sully, gave her very little

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satisfaction. She found in them no hope whatever of winning a crown and a diadem. Some told her that she would never be married more than once; others that she would die young; others, again, that a certain intimate acquaintance of hers would play her an ugly trick. All declared that they could find no indication whatever, neither in her nativity nor in the lines of her hands or face, that she or any of her family was destined to wield a sceptre or wear a royal crown. Although we leave the entire responsibility for these predictions to Sully, we must admit that it is certain that Gabrielle allowed herself to be besieged by soothsayers, that she was much worried and full of anxiety, and would spend her nights in weeping. Like many women in her condition, she was haunted by the idea of death, with which she often troubled the King. According to L'Estoile, she would receive in her dreams warnings from Heaven of some great misfortune that was soon to befall her. One night, shortly before leaving Fontainebleau, the King and she both dreamed the same dream: a great fire, from whose flames she was unable to escape, was consuming the Duchess. The King dreamed that he watched her die. The excitement awakened them both, and they told each other what they had seen in their sleep.

People living at the time seem to have been greatly preoccupied by these prophecies. Pierre Mathieu, a dignified magistrate and grave historian, was a witness of the events he relates, and he expresses himself as follows:—‘The soothsayers whom

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idleness and curiosity kept as welcome guests at the Court foretold that a child would prevent her from realising her hopes. One of these told me what he had gathered from the facts concerning her nativity, adding that it was infallible, but that God was above all. I believed this more sincerely than he, but seeing that the stars had foretold the death of a great lady and that their prediction had in many instances proved true, I cast the burden of my doubts upon the bosom of the Everlasting God.'

'As the time of the Easter Festival approached,' says Chiverny, 'the King, wishing to be alone, dismissed all of us members of his Council, bidding us celebrate the Festival at our own houses.' René Benoît, the King's confessor, told the future husband and wife that as the time of the Passover drew near they ought to be parted from one another for a time; that she who was about to become Queen owed a good example to her people after the many bad examples she had given them. He advised the King to send her to Paris, there publicly to make her devotions in her parish church.

This separation, coming at the moment when Gabrielle was about to realise the aim of her whole life, when she thought she had only to stretch forth her hand to seize the crown, cast a gloom over her. She was in an advanced state of pregnancy, her brain was wearied by so much excitement and impatience, her health impaired by the shattered state of her nerves.

It was therefore under the influence of the most

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sinister presentiments that the Duchess quitted the palace of Fontainebleau. The state of her health forbade her travelling on horseback or in her coach; she went by litter, escorted by the King, on Monday, the 5th of April. They supped at Melun, and reached Savigny by night-time. On the morning of the next day the King accompanied her as far as the banks of the Seine, where a boat was waiting to take her across.

With her went Bassompierre, now for some time settled at the Court, who was in high favour with both Henry and his mistress on account of his gay humour. On board the boat he contrived to turn her mind from her gloomy thoughts and they played cards together. She was accompanied also by the Duc de Montbazon in his position as Captain of the Guards, together with the indispensable La Varane, and her women. When the moment came for her to take leave of the King, Gabrielle seems to have lost all self-control. She burst into a flood of tears, and bitterly lamenting that she had ever set out, she told the King of her presentiment that she would never see him again. He was on the point of giving way to her entreaties and taking her back to Fontainebleau. But at length, after a long and passionate embrace, having received a thousand commissions concerning her children, her servants, and her house, the King tore himself from her arms, and she proceeded on her way across the Seine. She reached Paris at about three o'clock in the afternoon, landing at the quay near the arsenal, where dwelt her sister, the Maréchale de Balagny.

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Her brother-in-law the Maréchal, her brother the Marquis de Cœuvres, Madame and Mademoiselle de Guise, Madame de Retz and her daughters, and several others were awaiting her on the quay. She remained for a short time by the side of her sister; but, weary from the journey, she soon withdrew from the crowd that had come to see and welcome her, and betook herself to the house of Sieur Zamet. She did not sleep there, although some state that she did. She only supped with Zamet, and then retired to the house of her aunt, Madame de Sourdis, where she felt quite at her ease, and where she always lodged whenever she came to Paris for only a short stay. She never went to her hotel in the Rue Fromenteau, which communicated with the Louvre, except when the King was in Paris. As for Zamet's house, it was a house given up to pleasure and elaborate entertainments, where every luxury and every refinement were to be found. It was built in the form of an Italian palace, hidden at the end of a garden, of which one long high wall ran along one side of the Rue de la Cerysaie. The memories that Gabrielle must have had of the house could scarcely have been edifying. That she should on her arrival have accepted a repast prepared for her (for Zamet expected her) is easily explained, but it is not easy to understand how she could have stayed there. She came to Paris for the edification of the people, and it would certainly have been a bad beginning to have established herself with a man of a reputation such as Zamet's. As a fact, she went on the first evening of her arrival to her

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aunt's house, close to the church where she intended to receive the sacrament at Easter.

On this first evening of her stay at Paris she left Zamet's house feeling ill. She had eaten a lemon that had disagreed with her. This seems certainly to be a fact. Nervous and anxious about her condition, before retiring to rest she wrote to Madame de Sourdis, begging her to join her. She thought her aunt was at Chartres, but the messenger she had hastened to despatch had to go as far as her estate of Alluye before he found her. Madame de Sourdis set out on Wednesday immediately on receipt of her niece's letter. When she reached the château of Esclimont, where dwelt the Chancellor de Chiverny, she borrowed a fresh relay of horses to hasten her journey. But on arriving at Chartres, where her husband was governor, she was detained by a riot that had broken out in the town. She was the stronger of the two, and went to the aid of her husband, against whom the people of Chartres had risen in rebellion. It was even necessary, before order could be restored, to appeal to the Chancellor, who was governor of the province.

All this delayed Madame de Sourdis considerably, and in spite of a second letter from her niece, and shortly after news of an increasingly serious character, she was not able to reach Paris until the Saturday morning.

On the Wednesday Gabrielle began the discharge of her duties towards the Church by presenting herself at the service of *Tenebrae* at the church of Petit-Saint-Antoine, where a sacred concert was

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held. She went in her litter. M. de Montbazon, Captain of the Guards, marched by her side, and the princesses of Lorraine and many other ladies followed in their coaches. Her escort was a band of archers.

The spring of this year was already far advanced, and in the early days of April the vine was already in full bud. It was a beautiful day, and a crowd had already gathered at the church of the Petit-Saint-Antoine, attracted by the excellence of the music that was to be heard there. The entry of the future Queen and her suite must have greatly added to its numbers. A chapel had been specially reserved for her. By her side sat Mademoiselle de Guise, to whom during the service she showed certain letters from Rome, in which she was assured that her desires were soon to be fulfilled. She also showed her two letters which she had received from the King during the day, which were full of tenderness and expressions of the keenness of his desire to see their marriage celebrated. It was not long before Gabrielle began to be conscious of the heat in the church. When the service was over she told Mademoiselle de Guise that she would retire to her bed, and begged her to attend her. She then entered her litter to return to the deanery. When Mademoiselle de Guise rejoined her she complained of a pain in her head, and was undressed, and put to bed. Almost immediately after she was seized with a fainting fit, from which she only recovered after many attempts had been made to revive her.

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This first attack must have occurred on the Wednesday afternoon ; it was the first admonition of the terrible suffering she was to endure, and to which she finally succumbed. The account given in the *Amours du Grand Alcandre*, which fixes this day as that on which the Duchess attended the service at the church, is confirmed by the letter of the Président de Vernhyes, which we have already quoted ; it is an essential point : ' On Wednesday she attended *Tenebrae* at the church of Petit-Saint-Antoine, and was not able to be present at a second supper prepared for her [by Zamet], but retired at once to the deanery.'

She passed a peaceful night, and was able to get up and dress herself on Thursday morning. She had only a few steps to take to the church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, where she attended Mass and partook of holy communion. About two o'clock in the afternoon she felt very ill, and had again to seek her bed. At four she was seized with the first pains of labour. These pains were accompanied with most alarming attacks of fainting and convulsions ; at eight o'clock in the evening they ceased.

On the next day, Friday, her condition was so much worse that she had no more strength left. The doctors decided to assist the delivery. ' Shortly after they drew from her a child still-born, which they only succeeded in bringing away in pieces ; she was bled three times, was given four suppositories, which however were of no avail whatever and had no effect in helping to remove the after-

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birth. She lingered until six o'clock in very great pain, the like of which doctors, apothecaries and surgeons had never seen before, as they themselves told me.¹ In her agony she tore her face and injured herself in other parts of the body.'

By six o'clock on Friday evening Gabrielle had lost her power of speech, her hearing, and her sight, and about five o'clock on the Saturday morning, after having suffered the most agonising pain, she died.

The doctors proceeded immediately to an examination of the body. The Président de Vernhyes tells us that 'the body was examined on Saturday and it was found that her liver and one lung were diseased, that she had a large stone in the kidney and a wound in the head. He adds that the doctors said that a lemon she had eaten had been the primary cause of her illness.

After the confinement all at the deanery seem completely to have lost their heads. A large number of people, attracted by curiosity, and finding the doors open, penetrated as far as the sufferer's bedroom even on the Friday, when her agony was at its height. No one seems to have had control enough to respect the last moments of the poor woman's life. On the following Saturday morning, after her death, the confusion was even greater. The house was positively invaded by the curious. Madame de Sourdis at length arrived from Chartres during the Saturday. She found Mademoiselle de Guise in a fainting condition,

¹ Président de Vernhyes.

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and she herself lost consciousness for a time. Président de Vernhyes, who has furnished us with these details, arrived at this very moment to give Gabrielle the holy water; and, speaking of Made-moiselle de Guise, he says: 'She was still in a faint, and Madame de Guise, her mother, in a passion of grief and tears.'

The ambassador of Venice, by invitation from the Maréchal de Balagny, as being a near relation to the deceased, went himself and gave her the holy water. It was then that he learnt that, in accordance with the custom of the time, her effigy was to be placed upon a couch, and her body placed in a coffin and deposited immediately in an abbey in the neighbourhood of Meaux, where a chapel would be built for it.

IV

THE KING DURING THE ILLNESS

WE will now retrace our steps, and see what passed at the Court during this unfortunate confinement.

On Thursday, Gabrielle, feeling that her position was becoming more dangerous, wrote to the King, and commanded a noble of the name of Puipeyroux to take the letter to him at Fontainebleau, and beg him to consent to her returning again to the boat and coming to him, hoping that 'he would immediately come and see her and marry her before she died, for the benefit of her children.'¹ . . . And

¹ Marbault.

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as a fact, no sooner had Puipeyroux arrived than the King sent him off to see that the ferry-boat of the Tuileries was in readiness; he wished to cross the water by this boat, so that he might not be seen in Paris, and he immediately mounted his horse to ride to it.'

The King had received alarming reports of the Duchess one after the other; towards evening on Thursday he despatched Beringhem, his chief equerry, to Paris. The latter travelled throughout the night, reached the deanery at five o'clock on Friday morning, and announced to the Duke the speedy arrival of the King, who had left Fontainebleau at daybreak.

'On Good Friday, when we were at church at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois,' said Bassompierre, 'La Varane came to announce to the Maréchal d'Ornano that Madame la Duchesse had just passed away and that it would be advisable to prevent the King from coming to Paris. He begged the Maréchal to go out to meet the King, who was already on his way, travelling by diligence, and stop him from entering the town. . . . I happened to be by the side of the Maréchal and he begged me to come with him. We found the King close by Villejuif, riding post-haste for Paris. . . .'

Some time before he met the Maréchal and Bassompierre the King 'caught up Puipeyroux on the road, and scolded him roundly for not having been more expeditious in announcing his arrival.' Next he met with M. de Bellièvre, who was waiting for him, and who, having left his house of Villeneuve,

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was eagerly asking for news of the passers-by, keeping his coach ready for any emergency. Thus it was that M. de Bellièvre watched the coming from Paris of the Maréchal d'Ornano and Bassompierre, and from Fontainebleau of Puypeyroux, followed shortly after by the King and the officers of his household.

The King, 'when very near to Juvisy, met M. de Bellièvre, on his way to Fontainebleau, from whom he heard of the death, and, notwithstanding the news, he wished to go to Paris and see the Duchess as she lay dead. From this M. de Bellièvre dissuaded him, pointing out to him how greatly he would injure his reputation, in that his actions were known of all the world; therefore he let himself be persuaded and returned to Fontainebleau. . . .'

Marbault's account confirms that of Bassompierre, and they both are agreed in pretending that the death of the Duchess was announced to Henry on the Friday. The explanation of this error is as follows:—

According to the letter of Président de Vernhyes, La Varane on the Thursday, about four o'clock, 'was hurried off to His Majesty. La Varane warned the King of the terrible state in which the Duchess lay, and begged him not to come to Paris, but in vain. Perhaps he found him determined to listen to the supplications of the dying woman and marry her *in extremis*.'

But even if before leaving Fontainebleau Henry did not seem disposed to grant Gabrielle's prayer, La Varane, nevertheless, feared that in the presence

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of the dying, if she had still a few hours to live, the King might yield, and marry her.

He had waited so long for the bull from the Pope, might he not be justified in thinking that it was even then on the way, and that the Pope really had at last annulled his marriage with Margaret? And what in that case was to prevent him from marrying a woman who was in her last agony? Her death would wipe out any irregularity in the proceeding, and her children would be legitimate.

Now La Varane was a devoted servant, who, although his actions might not in all cases be free from blame, upon occasion, when his master's interests were at stake, flinched at nothing, and displayed remarkable intelligence and resource. To ward off this blow and protect the King against himself La Varane hesitated not a moment. He set out again from Fontainebleau on the same Thursday night. Feeling sure that the King would follow him almost immediately, and that, once at Paris, he would commit the irreparable error, he hastened his pace, and immediately on his return, since he had not himself succeeded in persuading the King to remain at Fontainebleau, he sent the Maréchal d'Ornano and Bassompierre to stop him on the road, and tell him that Gabrielle was dead, and his journey useless.

At this moment Gabrielle had still some twenty hours of life, and was awaiting the King's coming amid most excruciating pains and agony; but the King did not come.

Ornano and Bassompierre were both in La

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Varane's confidence. Was not this thought of marriage *in extremis* in the minds of all who were that day on the Fontainebleau road? Was it not a matter of the King coming post-haste? And those servants who at Villejuif barred the way to Paris against him were his devoted servants. But they were not moved, as some have said, by a desire to spare the King a sight of his mistress dead or sadly disfigured; far other thoughts animated them, but they were thoughts not formulated in words.

The King yielded, and decided to go back the way he had come. After having 'called Heaven to witness that never had accident so pierced him to the heart before or brought him such affliction,' he pronounced these grave words, which prove how well he knew how great an error he might have committed had he not thought her dead: 'I acknowledge' (looking up to heaven as he spoke) 'that God loves this country and has no wish to destroy it.'

V

THE RETURN TO FONTAINEBLEAU—THE FUNERAL

ON Friday evening the King, having returned to Fontainebleau, betook himself straightway to the solitary pavilion in the Jardin des Pins. The sight of the little Duc de Vendôme started his tears anew. The child's grief was greater than his years; he seemed to understand that his mother's death

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altered his destiny and placed the throne for ever out of his reach.

Meanwhile another child, the Prince de Condé, with the forwardness of a precocious courtier, was taking part in another scene. 'He was the first to receive news of the death, and heard of it before his mother. She found him crying or at any rate making an excellent pretence of crying (hiding his face in his cloak), and asked him what was the matter, urging him so insistently to tell her that he at length took the cloak from his face and told her, laughing, that Madame la Duchesse was dead. Yet before everyone else he behaved very differently, and, to please the King, he acted his grief very prettily: a simulation which one cannot but admire in a child who was not then eleven years of age.'¹

The Constable, who was at one of his châteaux, came to Fontainebleau to offer the King consolation, of which he himself was in need, having recently lost his wife at a similar crisis in her life.

The Maréchal de Balagny and M. de Bellièvre went in search of the jewels that the Duchess had with her at the moment of her death; the rest of her jewels, by far the greater part, were with the King. The King wrote several letters on this subject, and gave orders for an inventory to be made of all that Gabrielle had left behind her.

On Easter Sunday Beringhem reached Fontainebleau and confirmed the death of his mistress, adding further details, and remitting to the King

¹ L'Estoile.

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a list of her jewels and trinkets that had been drawn up by M. de Bellièvre.

The King went into black in mourning for Gabrielle, a thing which none of his predecessors had done even at the death of their queens. At the end of a few days he changed to violet, remaining in this mourning for three months. The Court followed his example.

The Duchesse de Bar shared her brother's grief, and wrote to him as follows:—

‘MY DEAR KING,—I know well that to your bitter grief words can bring no remedy. Therefore I will only use them to assure you that I feel your loss as deeply as I feel the great love I bear you, and as the loss of so perfect a friend itself compels me. I long to be by your side. . . . That it may please God, my King, to lessen your grief with the years, I pray with all my heart; and on this, I kiss you a thousand times, my dear, good King.

‘CATHERINE.’

On the 18th of April Henry replied to his sister's letter:

‘MY DEAR SISTER,—I received much consolation from your letter; I have great need of it, for my affliction is as much without equal as was she who is the cause of it; regrets and lamentation will go down with me to the grave. Yet since God has sent me into the world for my country's sake and not for my own, all my powers and my energies will be employed solely to the advancement and preservation of this my realm. The roots of my love are dead, they will never spring up again; but those

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of my friendship for you will be ever green, my dear sister, whom I kiss a million times.

‘HENRY.’

On Saturday, the 17th of April, the funeral took place. By order of the King she was accorded the funeral of a princess of the blood. According to custom, her effigy was made *di stucco*, in likeness of her.

During four days this effigy lay on a great bed in a vestibule at her usual dwelling-place. In it she appeared in a sitting position, having on her head a ducal coronet, and wearing a cloak of gold. Above the bed was a canopy of cloth of gold. By the side of the bed stood her relations, clad in deep black, and several priests, who offered up prayers unceasingly at two altars. At the foot of the bed two heralds, with black coats of arms, on which were embroidered *fleurs de lis* in gold, offered holy water to the princes and other lords as they came to pay their respects to the dead. Beneath the bed lay the body in a coffin. The vestibule was hung with rich tapestries belonging to the King. The remainder of those present comprised archers of his Majesty's guard, his *valets de chambre*, gentlemen servants, and other officers of his household. At the hours of repast the latter offered various dishes to the image of the Duchess, waiting upon her as though she were still alive. The princesses who happened to be in the room at those hours assisted in the handing of the food.

After these four days a burial service was held in the neighbouring church of Saint-Germain-

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l'Auxerrois, and the coffin was taken not to Meaux, as it ought to have been, but to the monastery of Maubisson, six miles off, the Abbess of which was sister to the Duchess, and there it remained until another decision was come to concerning it.

As it left Paris a great cavalcade of nobles went with it, and many ladies in their coaches. No honour was omitted that would have been paid had Gabrielle been Queen of France. Such is the account given by the ambassador of Venice, to which we add in completion that from Paris the two bodies of mother and child were carried to Saint-Denis, where a solemn service was held, and thence to Maubisson, where they were deposited in a vault of the church.

This death happened so conveniently for the safety of the kingdom and the fame of the King, that suspicions arose in the minds of the people as to the origin and character of the malady. But, *semper est gravior fama adversus exitus dominantium*, as Tacitus says; it was chiefly by her own people that she was suspected of having been poisoned. The Chancellor de Chiverny, who feared that all was lost for him when Gabrielle was gone, does not write one word in his Memoirs to justify us in thinking that he believed in poisoning. Madame de Sourdis had thoughts only of leaving Fontainebleau and begging the King to allow her the charge of Gabrielle's children. Her father immediately sent off vans to the hotel in the Rue Fromenteau to remove the heavy furniture left by his daughter. Her brother, the Marquis de

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Cœuvres, who more than anyone had cause to grieve for a loss which suddenly put an end to all his hopes, fell ill.

None of the members of her family seem ever to have suspected foul play. Among the people, some old Leaguers carried their dark hints even to the throne of the King. In reality no one at Court, above all none who attended her in her last illness, thought of anything but a perfectly natural death, which indeed was clearly enough indicated in the course of her confinement. It was not until many years later, after the publication of Sully's *Economies Royales*, that the manner of her death became a question of controversy.

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